DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 572 HE 032 787

AUTHOR	Peterson, Marvin W.; Einarson, Marne K.; Augustine, Catherine H.; Vaughan, Derek S.
TITLE	Designing Student Assessment To Strengthen Institutional Performance in Comprehensive Institutions. Project 5.2, Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment.
INSTITUTION	Michigan Univ., Ann Arbor. Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education.; National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, Stanford, CA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	NCPI-TR-5-09
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	108p.; For other Project 5.2 documents, see HE 032 786-790.
CONTRACT	R309A60001
AVAILABLE FROM	National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, Stanford University, School of Education, 520 Galvez Mall, 508 CERAS, Stanford, CA 94305-3084 ($12). Tel: 650-723-4724; Fax: 650-725-3936; Web site: http://ncpi.stanford.edu.
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Research (143) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Accrediting Agencies; Administrator Role; College Role; College Students; Colleges; Data Analysis; Data Collection; Educational Improvement; *Evaluation Methods; Evaluation Utilization; Higher Education; Planning; Questionnaires; School Policy; State Government; *Student Evaluation; Tables (Data); *Undergraduate Students
IDENTIFIERS	*Comprehensive Universities

ABSTRACT

This monograph, part of a series on student assessment, reports on the results of a national survey that examined institutional support for undergraduate student assessment. It provides a national profile of student assessment initiatives at comprehensive institutions and compares it to assessment practices and support patterns found in all types of postsecondary institutions. The study also offers advice for administrators, faculty, and staff in comprehensive institutions who are designing student assessment approaches and support processes that are likely to foster institutional improvement. Also included is the survey instrument used to gather study data, which institutions can use to examine patterns for student assessment on their own campuses. The monograph is organized in nine sections: (1) "Introduction and Overview"; (2) "Perspectives on Student Assessment in Higher Education"; (3) "The Influence of External Groups"; (4) "Approaches to Student Assessment"; (5) "Organizational and Administrative Support Patterns"; (6) "Assessment Management Practices and Policies"; (7) "Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment"; (8) "Key Relationships"; and (9) "Executive Summary: Research Results and Recommendations." Appended is the survey instrument, the "Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment for Comprehensive Institutions," and information on the construction and content of variables. (Contains 43 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 440 572

Designing Student Assessment to Strengthen Institutional Performance in Comprehensive Institutions

NCPI

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

National Center for Postsecondary Improvement

2

HE 032 787

Designing Student Assessment to Strengthen Institutional Performance in Comprehensive Institutions

MARVIN W. PETERSON
MARNE K. EINARSON
CATHERINE H. AUGUSTINE
DEREK S. VAUGHAN

National Center for Postsecondary Improvement
Stanford University
School of Education
520 Galvez Mall, 508 CERAS
Stanford, CA 94305-3084

The work reported herein was supported in part by the Educational Research and Development Center program, agreement number R309A60001, CFDA 84.309A, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed in the report do not reflect the position or policies of OERI or the U.S. Department of Education. NCPI Technical Report Number 5-09.

Designing Student Assessment to Strengthen Institutional Performance in Comprehensive Institutions

Marvin W. Peterson, Professor and Principal Researcher
Marne K. Einarson, Research Assistant
Catherine H. Augustine, Research Assistant
Derek S. Vaughan, Research Assistant

Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education
University of Michigan

National Center for Postsecondary Improvement
Project 5.2 Organizational and Administrative Support
for Student Assessment

National Center for Postsecondary Improvement
Stanford University
School of Education
508 CERAS
Stanford, CA 94305-3085

Phone: 650-723-7724
Fax: 650-725-3936

National Center for Postsecondary Improvement
University of Michigan
2339 School of Education Building
610 E. University
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259

Phone: 734-647-7768
Fax: 734-936-2741

Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education
University of Michigan
2117 School of Education Building
610 E. University
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259

Phone: 734-764-9472
Fax: 734-764-2510

Website: http://ncpi.stanford.edu

The National Center for Postsecondary Improvement is supported under the Educational Research and Development Center program, agreement number R209A60001, CFDA 84.309A, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. The findings and opinions expressed by NCPI do not reflect the position or policies of OERI or the U.S. Department of Education.

Reports and Publications of NCPI Project 5.2

Peterson, M. W. (1998). Assessing institutional support for student assessment. In T. W. Banta (Ed.), Assessment Update. Vol. 10 (4). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Peterson, M. W. (1998). Improvement to emergence: An organization-environment research agenda for a postsecondary knowledge industry. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

Peterson, M. W., & Augustine, C. H. (in press). External and internal influences on institutional approaches to student assessment: Accountability or improvement? Research in Higher Education.

Peterson, M. W., & Augustine, C. H. (in press). Organizational practices enhancing the influence of student assessment information in academic decisions. Research in Higher Education.

Peterson, M. W., Augustine, C. H., Einarson, M. K., & Vaughan, D. S. (1999). Designing student assessment to strengthen institutional performance in associate of arts institutions. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

Peterson, M. W., Augustine, C. H., Einarson, M. K., & Vaughan, D. S. (1999). Designing student assessment to strengthen institutional performance in baccalaureate institutions. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

Peterson, M. W., & Einarson, M. K. (in press). An analytic framework of institutional support for student assessment. In J. Smart (Ed.), Higher education: Handbook of theory and research. (Vol. XV). New York: Agathon Press.

Peterson, M. W., Einarson, M. K., & Augustine, C. H. (1997). Inventory of institutional support for student assessment. National survey instrument. Stanford, CA: Stanford University,. National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

Peterson, M. W., Einarson, M. K., Augustine, C. H., & Vaughan, D. S. (1999). Designing student assessment to strengthen institutional performance in comprehensive institutions. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

Peterson, M. W., Einarson, M. K., Augustine, C. H., & Vaughan, D. S. (1999). Designing student assessment to strengthen institutional performance in doctoral and research institutions. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

Peterson, M. W., Einarson, M. K., Augustine, C. H., & Vaughan, D. S. (1999). Institutional support for student assessment: Methodology and results of a national survey. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

Peterson, M. W., Einarson, M. K., Trice, A. G., & Nichols, A. R. (1997). Improving organizational and administrative support for student assessment: A review of the research literature. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

Peterson, M. W., Einarson, M. K., Trice, A. G., & Nichols, A. R. (1997). An analytic framework of institutional support for student assessment. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW 1
Purpose of the Monograph 1
Definition of Student Assessment 2
Preview of the Monograph 3
2. PERSPECTIVES ON STUDENT ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION 4
Growth of Student Assessment 4
Characteristics of Comprehensive Institutions 5
A Framework of Institutional Support for Student Assessment 7
Description of National Survey 9
3. THE INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL GROUPS 11
State Role in Student Assessment 11
Regional Accrediting Role in Student Assessment 15
External Sources of Support for Student Assessment 16
Summary Observations 18
4. APPROACHES TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT 19
Type and Extent of Student Data Collected 19
Timing of Data Collection 22
Student Assessment Instruments and Methods Used 23
Student Assessment Studies and Reports 26
Summary Observations 28
5. ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PATTERNS 29
Institution-Wide Assessment Support Strategy 29
Institution-Wide Administrative and Governance Activities 31
Leadership and Faculty Support for Student Assessment 32
Planning and Coordinating Student Assessment 33
Evaluating the Student Assessment Process 37
Summary Observations 39
6. ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND POLICIES 41
Practices for Managing Student Assessment 41
Policies Supporting and Promoting the Use of Student Assessment 43
Summary Observations 45
7. USES AND IMPACTS OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT 46
Uses in Academic Decisions 47
Institutional Impacts 48
Summary Observations 48
8. KEY RELATIONSHIPS 49
External and Internal Influences on Student Assessment Approaches 49
Influences on Using Assessment Information in Academic Decisions 51
Influences of Student Assessment Information on Internal & External Institutional Performance 54
Summary Observations 58
9. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: RESEARCH RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 59
Student Assessment: A Critical Institutional Perspective 59
Student Assessment in Comprehensive Institutions: Results and Recommendations from the National Survey 59
Inventorying the Institutional Student Assessment Process 67
Planning for Student Assessment 68
APPENDICES 70
Appendix A: Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment for Comp. Institutions 70
Appendix B: Construction and Content of Variables 89
REFERENCES 98

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Institutional Use of External Services to Support Student Assessment by Service Provider 18
Table 2. Institutions Collecting Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Student Assessment Data at Entry, While Student is Enrolled, and at Exit 22
Table 3. Mean Scores of Extent of Use of Other Student Assessment Methods 25
Table 4. Institutional Use of Different Assessment Methods for Different Student Sub-Populations 26
Table 5. Institutions Conducting Student Assessment Studies 27
Table 6. The Influence of Institution-Wide Support, State Assessment Approach, and Accrediting Region on the Extent of Institutional Approach to Student Assessment for Public Comprehensive Institutions 50
Table 7. The Influence of External Influences, Institutional Context, Institutional Approach, Institution-Wide Support, and Management Practices and Policies on Using Student Assessment Information in Educational and Faculty Decisions for Comprehensive Institutions 53
Table 8. The Influence of External Influences, Institutional Context, Institutional Approach, Institution-Wide Support, and Management Practices and Policies on Faculty, Student, and External Impacts for Comprehensive Institutions 55

Figure 1 Framework of Institutional Support for Student Assessment 8
Figure 2. Development of State Plan for Student Assessment 11
Figure 3. State Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment 12
Figure 4. Influence of State Requirements for Student Assessment on Institutions' Assessment Activities 13
Figure 5. Methods Used to Review Institutions' Student Assessment Plans or Processes 14
Figure 6. State Review Criteria for Institutions' Student Assessment Plans or Processes 14
Figure 7. Regional Accreditation Association Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment 15
Figure 8. Influence of Regional Accreditation Requirements for Student Assessment on Institutions' Assessment Activities 16
Figure 9. Receipt of External Grants for Student Assessment by Source17Figure 10. Extent of Cognitive Data Collected on Current Students 20
Figure 11. Extent of Affective and Behavioral Data Collected on Current Students 20
Figure 12. Extent of Data Collected on Former Students 21
Figure 13. Institutional Use of Student Assessment Instruments to Collect Cognitive Data 24
Figure 14. Institutional Use of Student Assessment Instruments to Collect Affective and Behavioral Data 24
Figure 15. Preparation of Student Performance Reports by Level of Aggregation 27
Figure 16. Institutional Mission Emphasis 30
Figure 17. Purposes of Student Assessment 30
Figure 18. Institution-Wide Administrative and Governance Activities Used to Promote Student Assessment 31
Figure 19. Internal Constituent Support for Student Assessment 32
Figure 20. Types of Institutional Plan or Policy for Student Assessment 33
Figure 21. Membership on Institution-Wide Student Assessment Planning Group 34
Figure 22. Executive Responsibility for Student Assessment Planning Group 35
Figure 23. Approval Authority for Student Assessment Plan or Policies 36
Figure 24. Operating Responsibility for Day-to-Day Student Assessment Activities 37
Figure 25. Reporting Relationship of Individual with Operating Responsibility for Student Assessment Activities 37
Figure 26. Status of Student Assessment Evaluation 38
Figure 27. Elements of Student Assessment Evaluation 39
Figure 28. Extent of Institutional Use of Assessment Management Practices 42
Figure 29. Extent of Institutional Use of Assessment Management Policies 44
Figure 30. Institutional Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment Information 47

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This monograph reports the results of a national research survey that examines institutional support for undergraduate student assessment. It provides a national profile of student assessment initiatives at comprehensive institutions; advice for administrators, faculty, and staff who are designing student assessment approaches and support processes that are likely to foster institutional improvement; and an instrument that institutions can use to examine patterns for student assessment on their own campuses.

This report is a result of the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI) research program examining organizational and administrative support for student assessment in postsecondary institutions. In 1997-98, NCPI researchers conducted a major literature review followed by a national survey on institutional support for student assessment. While other dissemination efforts have focused on a research audience, this report is specifically written for administrators, faculty and staff in comprehensive colleges and universities who are involved with student assessment on their campuses.

Purpose of the Monograph

Administrators and faculty leaders have little credible and verifiable evidence to guide their planning and decision making regarding student assessment. The literature on student assessment offers many descriptions of student assessment practices at a variety of postsecondary institutions (Banta & Associates, 1993; Banta, Lund, Black, & Oblander, 1996) and a number of limited surveys have collected information concerning student assessment measures and methods used by focused groups of institutions (Cowart, 1990; El-Khawas, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996; Johnson, Prus, Andersen, & El Khawas, 1991). There has been comparatively less consideration of how colleges and universities can develop an effective institutional strategy for assessment or of organizational and administrative practices that support internal engagement in assessment and enhance the use of student assessment data. Guidelines for planning and implementing student assessment efforts are available (American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], 1992; Ewell, 1988a, 1988b; Rossman & El-Khawas, 1987) but largely missing is any systematic examination of the relationships among various ways institutions have approached and supported student assessment and the likelihood of their reaping positive impacts from student assessment efforts (Banta et al., 1996; Ewell, 1988b; Gray & Banta, 1997). Furthermore, there has been little research focused specifically on student assessment within comprehensive institutions.

Understanding the national profile of undergraduate assessment activities and support patterns found in comprehensive institutions is important for several reasons. First, it is helpful for institutions to know what their peers are doing in relation to student assessment. How are other institutions responding to external demands for student assessment? What approaches to student assessment are they using? How are they supporting and promoting student assessment institution-wide and through their policies and practices? How are they using student assessment data? What impacts has student assessment had on faculty as well as institutional and student performance? Finally, if student assessment activities do make a difference in terms of improved teaching and learning on campuses, how does that happen? What external influences, institutional approaches, and organizational and administrative support practices encourage internal involvement in student assessment and positive impacts from student assessment data?

This monograph will answer these questions through accomplishing three primary objectives. First, it will provide a national profile of current student assessment practices and institutional support patterns within comprehensive colleges and universities and compare this to

assessment practices and support patterns found in all types of postsecondary institutions. A second major objective is to provide advice for administrators, faculty, and staff in comprehensive institutions on designing student assessment approaches and support processes that are likely to foster institutional improvement. Finally this report includes the survey instrument used to gather data for this study in Appendix A. Institutions can use this inventory to examine patterns for student assessment on their own campuses.

We will discuss the student assessment methods used by institutions in this report, but it is not our intent to examine the specific instruments used or the measurement issues associated with their use. For a comprehensive review of the literature on student assessment in postsecondary institutions, readers are referred to Improving Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment: A Review of the Research Literature (Peterson, Einarson, Trice, & Nichols, 1997). The data from this survey have been summarized in several forms including numerous conference papers and journal articles and a technical report entitled Institutional Support for Student Assessment: Methodology and Results of a National Survey (Peterson, Einarson, Augustine, & Vaughan, 1999). Readers who are interested in the statistical analyses conducted on the student assessment data should consult the technical report. While this report relies on those statistical analyses, it will not provide extensive statistical details.

Definition of Student Assessment

Our focus in this report is on undergraduate student assessment from an institutional perspective. We are interested in what approach institutions use to assess student performance, how institutions are organized to promote and support student assessment, and how they use student assessment data to improve student, faculty and institutional performance.

In this monograph, we use the term student assessment to refer to activities other than traditional end-of-course grading that are used to measure a diverse array of dimensions of student performance or development. Institutions may decide to engage in student assessment for a variety of reasons or differing purposes. Cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of student performance and development may be assessed. Assessment efforts may be directed toward students as they enter the institution, during their enrollment or after they exit from the institution. Student assessment may use a variety of methods and may be planned and executed centrally within institutions or in a decentralized manner through the actions of individual academic units. This report will address all these dimensions of student assessment.

Preview of the Monograph

This report is presented in nine sections. Following this introduction, the second section, perspectives on student assessment, provides a brief recent history of the student assessment movement in general and in comprehensive institutions specifically. The conceptual framework of institutional support for student assessment that was developed in the literature review (Peterson et al., 1997) and guided the development of the survey instrument is then presented. Section two ends with a brief summary of the methods used to conduct the research on institutional support for student assessment.

Sections three through seven present the results of a national survey of institutional support for student assessment. These sections parallel the domains in the framework. In each section, information is presented for both comprehensive institutions and all institutions that responded to the study. Section three focuses on institutions' approaches to student assessment. This section is followed by a summary of the institution-wide support patterns evident in the study. Section five focuses on the influence of external groups, such as state agencies and accreditors, on institutional student assessment patterns. In this section, the influence of states on institutional student assessment activity is considered for public institutions only. Section six discusses assessment

management practices and policies used by institutions to promote or assure the use of student assessment information. Section seven reports on the institutional uses and impacts of student assessment.

Section eight is based on the statistical analyses conducted on the national survey data. It presents the findings of three sets of key relationships examined in the study. The first focuses on the influence of external groups on institutional approaches to student assessment. The second examines the relationship of external influences, assessment approaches, institution-wide support patterns, and assessment management practices and policies to the institutional uses of student assessment. The third analysis examines the relationship of external influences, institutional context, assessment approaches, institution-wide support patterns, and assessment management practices and policies to the impacts of engaging in student assessment. Section nine presents a summary of our research findings and related recommendations for specific assessment activities within comprehensive institutions. It concludes with general guidelines for institutions to use to examine and redesign or plan their student assessment process and functions.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2. PERSPECTIVES ON STUDENT ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

An overview of the development of student assessment in higher education and in comprehensive institutions suggests the need for the institutional perspective that guides this report. A guiding framework conceptualizes seven domains of an institution's student assessment strategy: institutional context, external influences, approach adopted, institutional support patterns, assessment management practices and policies, assessment culture and climate, and institutional uses and impacts of student assessment.

This monograph concurs with the perspective of other scholars of student assessment. We agree that at its best, student assessment is not simply an exercise to gather data or respond to accountability requirements. Rather, an effective student assessment approach is one that gathers information about selected aspects of students' characteristics, achievements and experiences and uses this information to shape institutional policies, processes, and practices in ways that lead to improved student performance and institutional functioning (AAHE, 1992; Banta & Associates, 1993; Ewell, 1984, 1987c, 1988b; Jacobi, Astin & Ayala, 1987).

Growth of Student Assessment

The assessment of student performance in higher and postsecondary education is not a new concept or phenomenon. The first College Board examination designed to assess student learning outcomes on a national scale was administered in 1901. The ensuing decades are marked by events that reflect a growing concern with assessing college student performance, such as: the emergence of a regional accreditation focus on student assessment; the establishment of university-based and national testing centers; and the development of broadened taxonomies of student outcomes (Resnick & Goulden, 1987; Sims, 1992). However, these earlier developments pale in comparison to the emergence in the mid 1980s of student assessment as an important focus of educational policy at the national, state and institutional level — a focus that continues today.

This heightened interest in student assessment is the result of many broad forces. In the larger societal and political arena, concerns about consumer protection, the rising costs of education, the training and human resource needs for state and regional economic development, and fiscal pressures on state and federal government all have shaped public interest in the educational contribution of higher education institutions. At the institutional level, the challenges of expansion in the 1950s and 60s, the enrollment and financial constraints in the 1970s, and the new educational demands in the 1980s have shifted the managerial focus of performance by higher education institutions from resource adequacy, to efficiency, to effectiveness, to broader concerns for academic and institutional quality. Consequently, over the past decade and a half the assessment and improvement of student performance has been the focus of much of this discussion and of many efforts both external to and within colleges and universities.

A variety of specific activities at the national level — reports, guidelines, legislation, educational goals, and funding — have been credited with providing the initial stimulus for the student assessment movement in higher education in the last decade and a half. A series of national reports that critically examined the quality of education were published in the mid 1980s. The first, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), prompted calls for reform in elementary and secondary education. The following year Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education (National Institute of Education, 1984) addressed the conditions required for improving the quality of undergraduate education. Institutions were given three recommendations: set high expectations for student learning, actively involve students in learning, and develop an institutionalized process for assessing student learning. Subsequent reports such as To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the

Humanities in Higher Education (Bennett, 1984) and Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community (Association of American Colleges, 1985) continued this focus on issues of undergraduate education quality and assessment. In 1988 the U.S. Department of Education revised its Criteria for Recognition of Accrediting Agencies, stipulating that agencies must require educational institutions and programs to (1) clearly specify their educational objectives and (2) conduct student assessment to determine whether they were achieving these standards. In addition, the enactment of legislation such as the "Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act" and "Ability to Benefit" legislation (Education Commission of the States, 1991), adoption of the National Education Goals (Lenth, 1993, 1996; Nettles, 1995), and provision of federal funds for the development of institutions' assessment projects (Cook, 1989) contributed to the early momentum of the assessment movement.

State governments, reflecting these national developments, have also played a key role in stimulating postsecondary student assessment. The first state-level mandate for student assessment appeared when the Florida state legislature directed the higher education system to develop the College-Level Academic Skills Test in 1982. Since then, the number of states involved in student assessment has increased steadily with all but four of fifty states now reporting some type of student assessment initiative (Cole, Nettles, & Sharp, 1997). States have varied greatly in their approaches to student assessment policy, but there is evidence of a general shift in state-level approaches over the past decade. From the mid to late 1980s state assessment initiatives generally emphasized institutional improvement as their primary purpose and largely permitted institutions to design their own assessment efforts. Since 1990, states have placed greater emphasis on student assessment as a means of responding to external demands for accountability and have increasingly elected to mandate the content and form of institutions' assessment approaches.

Regional accreditation associations also have emerged as an important influence on student assessment. Regional accrediting associations vary in the length of time they have been involved in student assessment, their specific reporting requirements, and the range of assessment-related services provided to member institutions (Cole et al., 1997). Since the federal government revised its criteria for recognizing accrediting agencies in 1988, all six regional accreditation associations have required member institutions to undertake and document some form of student assessment activity. In turn, a growing number of institutions have reported that accreditation requirements are an important reason for deciding to engage in and increase their student assessment efforts (El-Khawas, 1995; Johnson et al., 1991).

Since the mid 1980s the number of postsecondary institutions engaged in some form of student assessment activity has steadily increased (El-Khawas, 1988, 1990, 1995). However, by 1990 only a small proportion of institutions had embarked on comprehensive student assessment programs (El-Khawas, 1990; Hexter & Lippincott, 1990; Johnson et al., 1991). Fewer still have reported achieving observable impacts from their student assessment efforts (Astin, 1991; Hutchings & Marchese, 1990). So it seems that, while many colleges and universities are investing faculty and administrative time and effort in student assessment, few are benefiting from its potential to improve student and institutional performance.

Characteristics of Comprehensive Institutions

Institutional type is an important dimension to consider when examining the approach an institution takes toward student assessment. To date, there has been little consideration of differences in effective organizational and administrative practices for promoting student assessment within specific types of institutions. Yet effective strategies and practices for planning, promoting and implementing undergraduate student assessment vary according to the type of postsecondary institution being considered — for example, what works in promoting student assessment in comprehensive institutions differs from what works in research institutions. In our national study of institutional support for student assessment, we found that there were many

statistically significant differences by institutional type on the approaches to, support for, policies and practices regarding, and uses and impact of student assessment reported by institutions and that they were typically stronger than differences by other institutional characteristics such as size or whether the institution is public or private.

The challenges comprehensive institutions face as they develop student assessment programs are quite different from those faced by other institutions. These differences stem, in part, from the institutional mission and curricular focus, governance structure, faculty roles and responsibilities, and student clientele typically associated with comprehensive colleges and universities.

More than other types of postsecondary institutions, comprehensive colleges and universities embrace a diffuse institutional mission. They function as both teaching- and research-oriented institutions. They give strong emphasis to undergraduate and graduate education and their curriculum spans a broad range from liberal arts to professional education programs. These dual emphases on teaching and research and on graduate and undergraduate education may affect the extent to which undergraduate student assessment is viewed as an institutional priority by administrators and faculty members alike, and so may influence their commitment to and involvement in assessment efforts. Building internal support for undergraduate student assessment may be easier to accomplish in comprehensive institutions than in research institutions, but more difficult than in institutions that have a clearer focus on undergraduate teaching, such as liberal arts and associate of arts colleges.

The distribution of decision-making power between administrators and faculty members within these institutions often falls midway between these two groups and is less clear than in other institutional types. Faculty have less decision-making authority than their peers in doctoral and research institutions and selective liberal arts colleges but more than that of faculty in associate of arts and less selective liberal arts colleges. These differences in governance suggest that effective patterns of organizational and administrative support for student assessment in comprehensive institutions will be configured differently from those found in other types of institutions. Institutions with an administratively-driven governance structure, such as associate of arts institutions, may be able to effectively use organizational policies to direct faculty involvement in assessment efforts while those in which faculty have considerably more professional autonomy and decision-making power, such as research institutions, may need to emphasize faculty leadership in planning and implementing assessment activities. Given their position in the mid-range of faculty and administrative decision-making power, comprehensive institutions may need to use a mix of administratively- and faculty-driven policies and practices to effectively promote student assessment.

Faculty in comprehensive institutions are expected to focus on both research and teaching responsibilities. On the positive side, faculty members' focus on teaching may mean they will be receptive to student assessment techniques that will lead to improving the teaching and learning process while their familiarity with conducting research may make them quite comfortable with designing and implementing assessment methods and analyzing the resulting data. Conversely, it could be that faculty willingness to engage in student assessment is hampered in comprehensive institutions by their competing responsibilities for teaching and research.

The characteristics of the student bodies at comprehensive institutions are also likely to be different from those at two-year and other types of four-year institutions. Comprehensive institutions may attract students who are less academically prepared than those who enroll in research, doctoral and private liberal arts institutions but more academically prepared than students in associate of arts institutions. Compared to other types of institutions, comprehensive institutions fall in the mid-range of the proportion of commuter versus residential, part-time versus full-time, and adult versus traditional age students enrolled. Finally, given their dual focus on undergraduate

and graduate education, comprehensive institutions attract students with varying educational goals. This rather diverse student profile must be taken into account when developing assessment plans and activities.

Unfortunately, there has been little research focused specifically on student assessment within comprehensive institutions. Although the existing literature includes some single- and multi-institution case studies of student assessment, it provides limited information concerning the current assessment activities conducted throughout the country by comprehensive colleges and universities. The few available studies offer conflicting evidence of the extent to which these institutions have been involved in undergraduate student assessment (El-Khawas & Knopp, 1996; Gentemann & Rogers, 1987; Scott, 1991). We did not find research that examined the relationship of student assessment approaches and institutional support practices to using and achieving impacts from student assessment in comprehensive colleges and universities.

A Framework of Institutional Support for Student Assessment

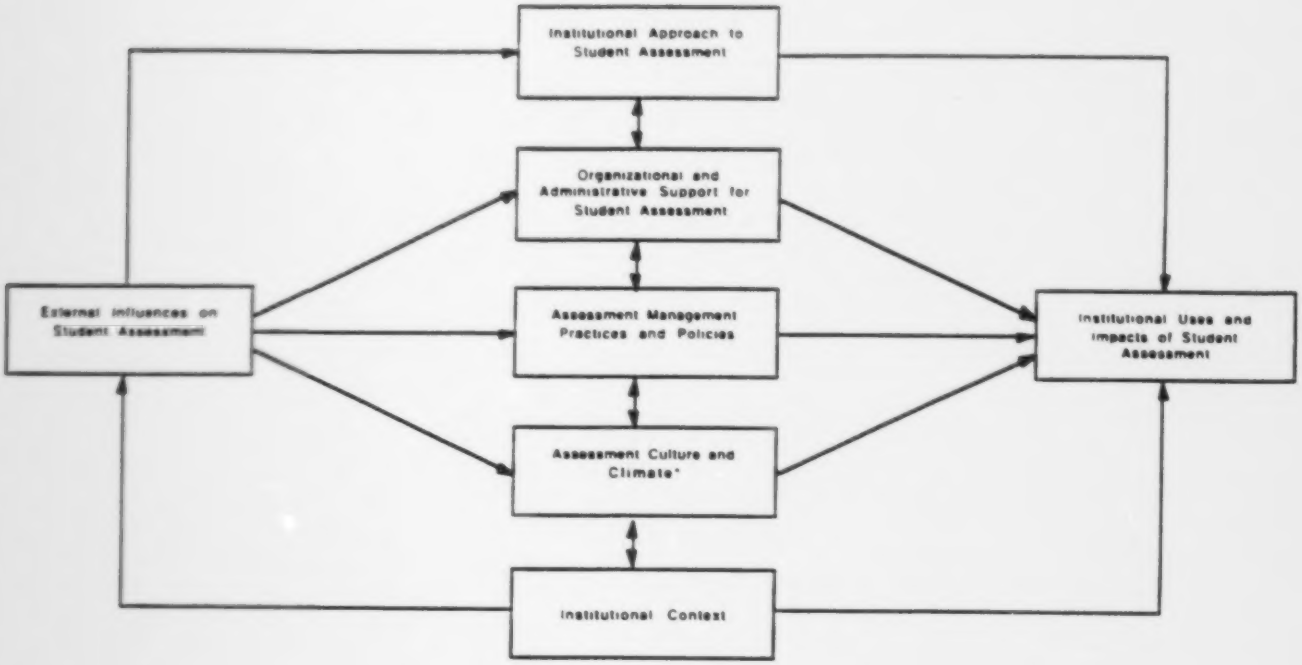
An institution's organizational and administrative context can be a powerful source of influence on administrators', faculty members' and students' behaviors and perceptions and can shape their views of what the institution values and which activities are important to engage in. Colleges and universities purposefully create a variety of student assessment approaches and structures, processes, policies and practices to support and implement student assessment. Institutions have varied greatly in their approaches to assessing student performance and the ways in which they have organized to support their assessment efforts, a finding that is hardly surprising given the great diversity and relative autonomy of colleges and universities in the American postsecondary system. Yet there is little systematic evidence available concerning the specific manner in which postsecondary institutions have organized and administered to support student assessment and the differential results of these efforts. For these reasons, we have chosen to examine student assessment from a research-based and institutional perspective.

An extensive literature review identified what is currently known about the organizational and administrative context for student assessment in postsecondary institutions. A detailed description of the literature review process and findings is available in other publications (Peterson et al., 1999; Peterson et al., 1997). From this review, we developed a framework of institutional support for student assessment. This framework, displayed in Figure 1, consists of seven interacting domains. It conceptualizes how institutions respond to external pressures for student assessment, how they approach student assessment, the organizational and administrative patterns they use to support student assessment, the assessment practices and policies they have adopted to promote student assessment, their culture and climate for student assessment, and how student assessment information is used by and has impacts on institutions. A seventh domain, institutional context, reflects the fact that these patterns probably differ significantly by institutional type, control and size. The culture and climate domain is not examined in this report and is the focus of future research activity. The other domains are briefly described below. A description of the variables used in this study, by domain, is provided in Appendix B.

External Influences on Student Assessment. A variety of external constituencies have played an important role in initiating and shaping student assessment efforts within postsecondary institutions. In particular, state-level initiatives and regional accreditation associations may exert strong direct influences through their requirements for student assessment. The business community, private foundations, and professional higher education associations may serve as weaker sources of influence — whether as participants in institutions' assessment efforts, as consultants or sources of resource materials, or as providers of funds for assessment-related activities. National efforts appear to have largely played an indirect role in influencing institutions' assessment efforts.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 1 Framework of Institutional Support for Student Assessment


Institutional Approach to Student Assessment
Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment
External Influences on Student Assessment
Assessment Management Practices and Policies
Institutional Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment
Assessment Culture and Climate*
Institutional Context

*This domain is not addressed in this study

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Institutional Approach to Student Assessment. Institutional approach to student assessment refers to institutional decisions regarding the collection and analysis of student assessment information. Important dimensions along which student assessment approaches can be differentiated include: the type or content of student assessment measures; the extent or array of student assessment data collected; the timing of data collection; the instruments and methods used to collect student assessment data; and the analyses conducted and reported for collected data.

Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment. The literature on student assessment identifies five important dimensions of organizational or administrative behavior patterns that may support student assessment efforts and enhance the likelihood that assessment will contribute to improvements in institutional performance: the institution-wide support strategy for student assessment; administrative and governance activities used to promote student assessment; leadership and faculty support for student assessment; planning and coordination of student assessment; and procedures used to evaluate and revise student assessment efforts.

Assessment Management Practices and Policies. Assessment management practices and policies refer to specific practices, policies, procedures, or activities intentionally devised by institutions to implement and support their student assessment efforts. A number of content activity areas of this domain have been identified as potential influences on student assessment including: academic resource allocation; student information systems; internal access to student information; distribution of assessment reports and studies; student involvement in assessment; professional development for student assessment; faculty evaluation and rewards; and academic planning and review processes.

Institutional Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment. Ideally, institutions will use the information collected through student assessment processes to contribute to improvement in institutional and student performance. Three broad domains of institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information are suggested in the literature. These are the use of assessment information for institutional decision making, its impact on various internal constituents and phenomena, and its impact on the institution's relationships with its external constituents.

Institutions may apply assessment information to several areas of academic decision making such as academic planning and review, the academic mission and goals, internal resource allocation, and faculty evaluation and rewards. Student assessment information may have both internal impacts, such as stimulating faculty interest in teaching and enhancing student learning, and external impacts, such as influencing state funding or re-accreditation decisions. The primary concern of this framework is to examine the relationship of external influences, institutions' assessment approaches, patterns of organizational and administrative support for assessment, and assessment management practices and policies to institutional uses and impacts of assessment information.

Institutional Context. Broad institutional characteristics such as institutional type, control and size are expected to moderate external influences on assessment, the institutional approach to student assessment, organizational and administrative support patterns, assessment management practices and policies, and institutional uses and impacts of assessment information.

Description of National Survey

Based on our review of the student assessment literature, we developed a survey instrument or inventory called "Institutional Support for Student Assessment" (ISSA). The instrument focuses on the assessment of undergraduate students conducted by postsecondary institutions — not by individual faculty or academic sub-units within institutions. The instrument is designed as a comprehensive inventory of external influences on institutions' student assessment

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

efforts, institutional approaches to student assessment, organizational and administrative support patterns for student assessment, assessment management practices and policies used, and institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information. The instrument was intended to assist institutions in obtaining a clear picture of their own student assessment efforts, to provide a national profile of undergraduate student assessment efforts in postsecondary institutions, and to increase current understanding of how institutions can engage in and promote student assessment that produces positive impacts on academic, student and institutional performance. A copy of the survey instrument is included in Appendix A.

In January 1998, the ISSA instrument was mailed to the chief academic administrator at all postsecondary institutions recognized by the U.S. Office of Education that offer undergraduate programs at the associate or baccalaureate degree level, excluding proprietary and specialized institutions. Completed surveys were received from 1,393 of the 2,524 institutions meeting these criteria for an overall response rate of 55%. Comprehensive colleges and universities were well represented in survey responses. Of the 518 comprehensive institutions to whom instruments were mailed, 315 or 61% completed and returned the survey. More than half of eligible public and private comprehensive institutions participated. Survey responses were quite evenly distributed across states and accrediting regions. Given this strong and diversified response rate, we are able to offer a representative profile of undergraduate student assessment activities undertaken in comprehensive colleges and universities. Throughout this report, we compare student assessment activities within comprehensive institutions to student assessment activities within all institutions responding to our survey, including comprehensive institutions.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

3. THE INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL GROUPS

Examines state and regional accreditation association requirements and external sources of support for student assessment. While both states and regional accrediting agencies have influenced institutions to engage in student assessment, accrediting associations are reported to have greater influence than states on comprehensive institutions' assessment initiatives.

State officials and regional accreditation associations have increasingly required postsecondary institutions to become engaged in student assessment. Together with professional associations and private foundations, they have also offered various services to support institutions' student assessment efforts. There has been relatively little examination of institutions' perceptions of and experiences with these external groups. To examine this domain, our survey included questions concerning: state requirements for student assessment; regional accreditation association requirements for student assessment; and external sources of support for student assessment. The following sections address each of these areas in turn.

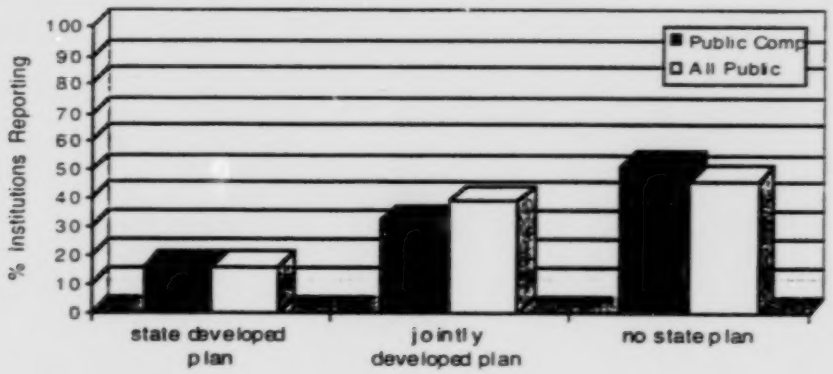
State Role in Student Assessment

States have varied widely in the development and content of their initiatives for postsecondary student assessment (Cole et al., 1997). To examine the role of state influences in some detail, the survey asked for institutions' perceptions of three dimensions of state assessment plans: the development process and reporting requirements of state assessment plans; the influence of state requirements on institutions' assessment efforts; and state review of institutions' assessment plans or processes. These questions were directed to state-funded institutions only.

Development and Reporting Requirements of State Assessment Plans

Development. Scholars have suggested that the influence of state assessment initiatives on institutions' assessment efforts may depend on whether or not institutions have had input in the development of the initiatives. Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether their state's plan for student assessment was developed primarily by state officials, through joint consultation between state officials and institutional representatives or whether no state plan or requirement for student assessment existed. Responses from comprehensive and all institutions receiving state funding are displayed in Figure 2.

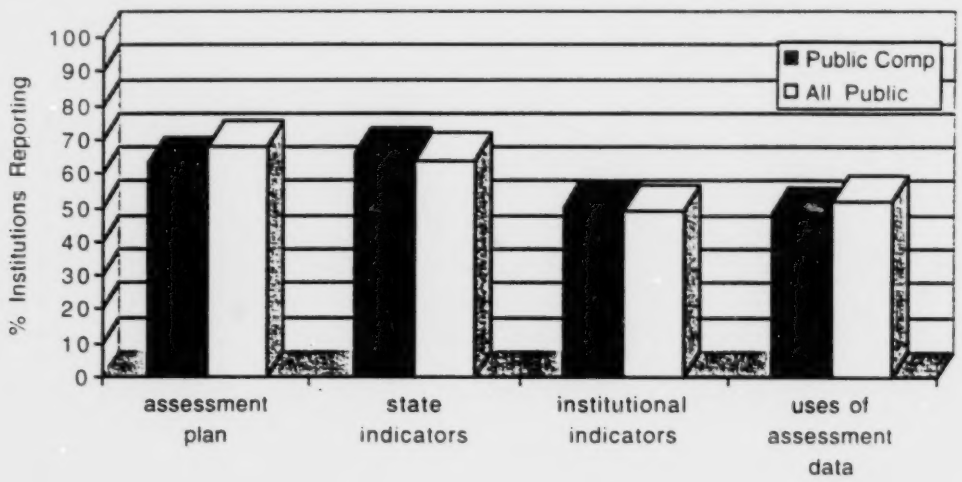
Figure 2. Development of State Plan for Student Assessment



Half of the public comprehensive institutions in our study report that a state plan or requirement for student assessment exists. When state plans exist, they are more likely to have been developed in consultation between state and institutional officials (32%) than by state officials alone (16%). Public comprehensive institutions do not differ from all public institutions in their perceptions of the existence and development of state plans for student assessment.

Reporting Requirements. Scholars also contend that the influence of state assessment initiatives will vary with the specific nature of the reporting requirements associated with these initiatives. What types of information are institutions required to report to state officials? We asked institutions with state plans for assessment which of the following types of information they were required to report as part of their state's assessment plan: evidence of a student assessment plan; measurement of state-mandated student performance indicators; measurement of institutionally-developed student performance indicators; and evidence of having used student assessment information. Institutions checked all applicable reporting requirements. Responses from comprehensive and all institutions receiving state funding are displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3. State Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment



*Only institutions with a state plan for student assessment responded to this question.

The most common reporting requirements for public comprehensive colleges and universities are evidence of a student assessment plan (63%) and measures of state-mandated student performance indicators (66%). Half of respondents say they must report on institutionally-devised student performance indicators (50%). A similar proportion (48%) are required to provide evidence of having used student assessment information. There are no major differences in the state reporting requirements experienced by public comprehensive institutions and all public institutions. This emphasis on evidence of an assessment plan and state-mandated student performance indicators is expected to contribute less to institutional support for student assessment than reporting requirements that emphasize evidence of assessment information use and institutionally-developed student performance indicators.

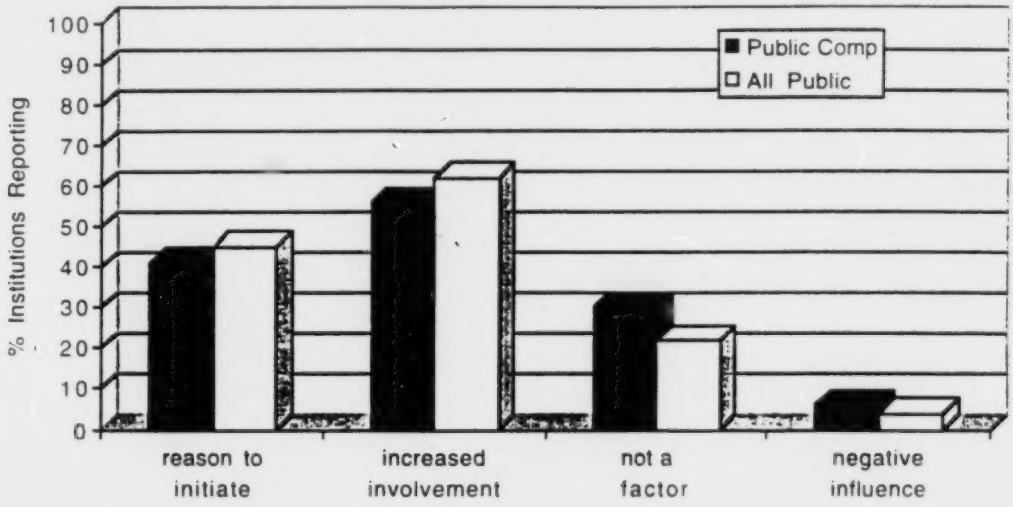
Influence of State Assessment Requirements

What influence have state assessment requirements had on institutions' undergraduate student assessment activities? Institutions were asked which of the following impacts on their

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

student assessment activities they attributed to state assessment requirements: were an important reason for institution initiating undergraduate student assessment; increased institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment; were not a factor in institution's undergraduate student assessment activities; or were a negative influence on institution's undergraduate student assessment activities. Institutions selected all applicable influences. Responses from public comprehensive institutions and all public institutions are displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Influence of State Requirements for Student Assessment on Institutions' Assessment Activities*



*Only institutions with a state plan for student assessment responded to this question.

Public comprehensive institutions most often report positive influences of state requirements on their student assessment activities. More than half (56%) report state requirements have increased their institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment and two-fifths (41%) indicate state requirements played an important role in their institution initiating student assessment efforts. One-third (32%) believe state requirements have had no influence on their institution's student assessment efforts while only 6% indicate state requirements have been a negative influence. Compared to all public institutions, public comprehensive institutions are slightly less likely to report positive influences of state requirements on their assessment activities and more likely to report no influence from state requirements.

State Review of Institutions' Student Assessment Plans

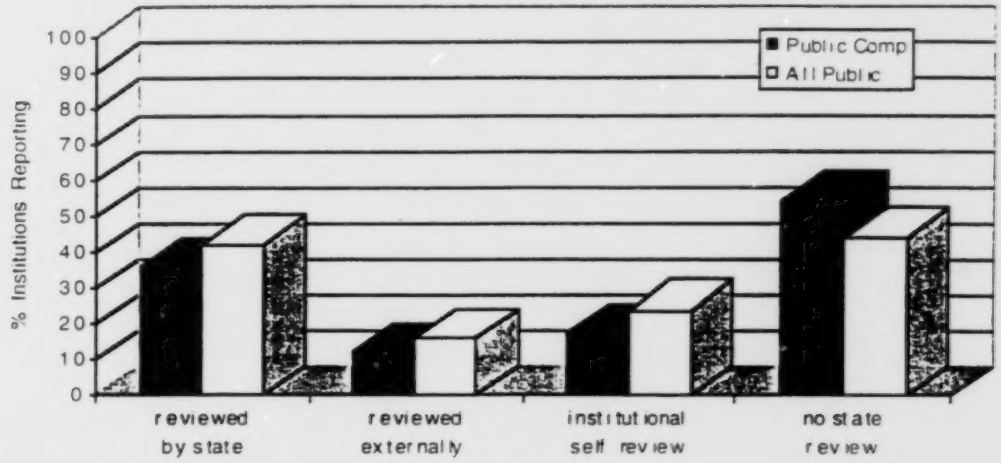
Occurrence of State Review. States vary in terms of whether and how they evaluate institutions' student assessment plans or information (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 1996). The survey asked respondents whether state officials had reviewed or evaluated their institution's student assessment plans or processes. If a state review or evaluation had occurred, respondents indicated whether this review had been conducted by state officials, external reviewers or the institution itself. Responses from public comprehensive institutions and all public institutions are presented in Figure 5.

Slightly less than half of public comprehensive institutions report their undergraduate student assessment plan or process has been reviewed by their state higher education agency

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(46%). Public comprehensive institutions are less likely than all public institutions to have undergone a state review. When a state review has occurred, it has most often been conducted by state officials (36%) and less often by external reviewers (12%) or the institution itself (17%).

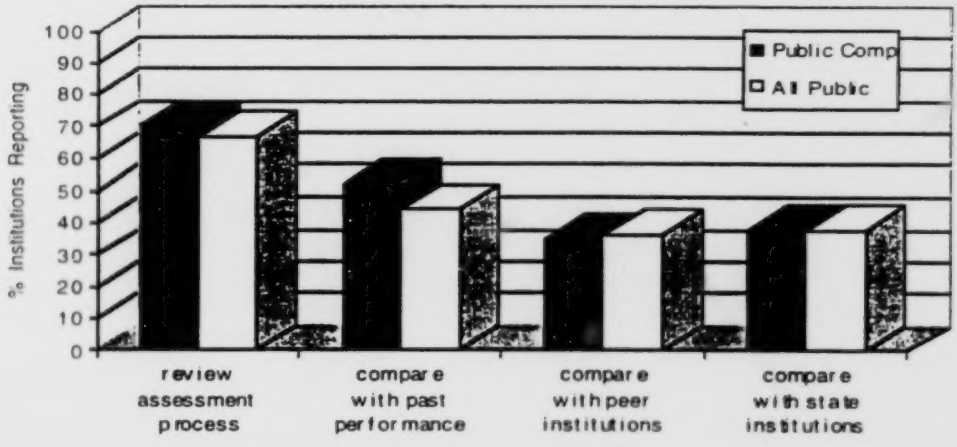
Figure 5. Methods Used to Review Institutions' Student Assessment Plans or Processes*



*Only institutions with a state plan for student assessment responded to this question.

State Review Criteria. Institutions that had undergone state review of their student assessment plan or process specified if the evaluation: reviewed the institution's student assessment process; compared the institution's student performance record to its past performance; compared the institution's student performance record with that of peer institutions; or compared the institution's student performance record with that of other institutions in the state. Responses from public comprehensive institutions and all public institutions are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. State Review Criteria for Institutions' Student Assessment Plans or Processes*



*Only institutions with state plans for student assessment responded to this question.

When public comprehensive institutions have undergone a state review of their student assessment plan or process, this review has most often focused on the institution's student assessment process itself (70%). Comparisons of institutions' student performance records are less common. If conducted, these most often involve comparing institutions' student performance to their own past performance (52%) followed by comparisons with the student performance records at other institutions in the same state (38%) or with those of peer institutions (35%). Compared to all public institutions in our study, public comprehensive institutions are a little more likely to have their current student performance record compared with their past performance. No other differences in state review criteria are evident.

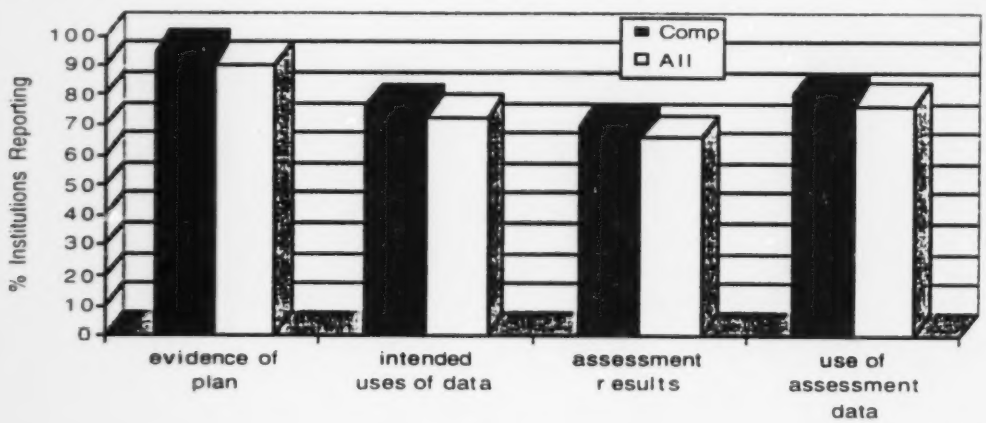
Regional Accrediting Role in Student Assessment

As noted earlier, regional accreditation agencies have been reported as important influences on institutions' decisions to begin or expand their student assessment activities (El-Khawas, 1990, 1992, 1995; Johnson et al., 1991). The majority of comprehensive institutions participating in our study (82%) had completed a regional accreditation review which required undergraduate student assessment. To further examine the role of regional accreditation associations in student assessment, the survey asked about the reporting requirements for regional accreditation and institutions' perceptions of the influence of regional accreditation requirements on their assessment efforts.

Regional Accreditation Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment

Regional accreditation associations vary in terms of the evidence they require institutions to report about student assessment efforts. It may be expected that requirements to report on the use being made of assessment information may contribute to greater institutional impacts from assessment than requirements that ask merely for evidence of an assessment plan or assessment data. We asked institutions which of the following types of information they were required to report to their regional accreditation association: evidence of a student assessment plan; intended institutional uses of student assessment information; results of student assessment; and evidence of having used student assessment information. Institutions checked all applicable reporting requirements. Very few (4%) comprehensive institutions were unfamiliar with their regional accreditation requirements for student assessment. Responses from comprehensive and all institutions are displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Regional Accreditation Association Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment

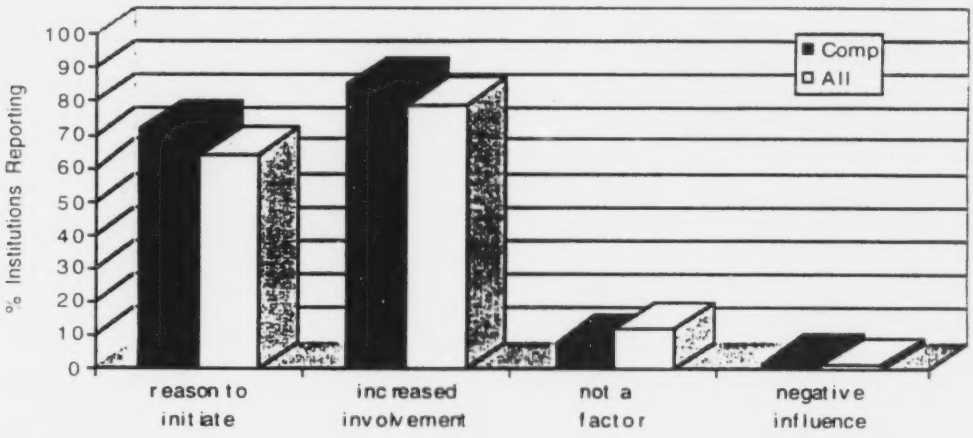


The majority (94%) of comprehensive institutions must provide their regional accreditation association with evidence that a student assessment plan or process is in place. A large proportion are required to provide evidence of the use they have made (80%) or intend to make (76%) of student assessment information. Slightly fewer report having to provide the results of student assessment (69%). The regional accreditation reporting requirements for student assessment reported by comprehensive institutions do not differ much from those reported by all institutions in our study.

Influence of Regional Accreditation Association Requirements for Student Assessment

What influence have regional accreditation association requirements had on institutions' undergraduate student assessment activities? Institutions were asked which of the following impacts on their student assessment activities they attributed to their regional accreditor's assessment requirements: were an important reason for initiating undergraduate student assessment; increased institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment; were not a factor in institution's undergraduate student assessment activities; or were a negative influence on institution's undergraduate student assessment activities. Institutions selected all applicable influences. Responses from comprehensive institutions and all institutions are displayed in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Influence of Regional Accreditation Requirements for Student Assessment on Institutions' Assessment Activities



Comprehensive institutions generally perceive regional accreditation requirements for student assessment as having had a positive influence on their student assessment activities. More than four-fifths (85%) report regional accreditation requirements have led to an increase in their institution's involvement in student assessment and almost three-quarters (72%) state these requirements were an important reason for their institution to initiate its undergraduate student assessment activities. Very few feel that regional accreditation requirements have had no influence on their institution's assessment efforts (8%) and fewer yet report negative consequences stemming from these requirements (2%). Comprehensive institutions report somewhat stronger regional accreditation influences on their assessment efforts than all institutions in our study.

External Sources of Support for Student Assessment

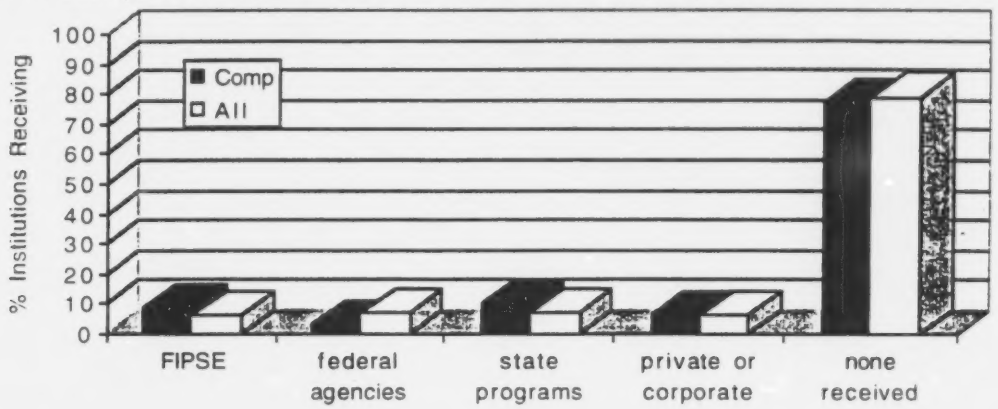
External constituents may influence institutions' involvement in student assessment by providing funding or services to support assessment efforts. Little is known about the extent to

which institutions have availed themselves of these external sources of support. Our survey asked institutions about their use of external grants and other services for improving their student assessment efforts.

Receipt of External Grants for Student Assessment

Institutions were asked if they had received grants to improve or support their student assessment practices from any of the following external sources: Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), other federal agencies, state incentive programs, and private foundations or corporate sources. Responses from comprehensive institutions and all institutions are presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Receipt of External Grants for Student Assessment by Source



The majority of institutions, both comprehensive and all, have not received external grants for improving student assessment practices (77% and 79% respectively). When comprehensive institutions have received grants, these are most likely to have come from the state (10%) and FIPSE (9%). However, no more than 10% of comprehensive institutions report receiving assessment-related grants from any of the external sources considered in this question. It is unclear whether this low rate of grant receipt stems from unavailability, ineligibility, or lack of awareness of external funding opportunities.

Use of External Services to Support Student Assessment

A variety of postsecondary organizations — professional associations, regional accrediting associations, state-level agencies, and consortia of institutions — provide a range of services intended to support institutions' student assessment efforts. These services include consultation, assessment conferences, training workshops, and publications or research reports on student assessment. For each of these four types of postsecondary organizations, the survey asked institutions which, if any, of these student assessment services they had used. Responses from comprehensive institutions and all institutions in our study are presented in Table 1.

While many comprehensive colleges and universities report that external services are not used or not available, they do use assessment-related services from some types of postsecondary organizations more than from others. They are much more likely to use services from professional associations and regional accreditation associations than from state agencies or institutional consortia. They are also likely to use certain types of assessment support services more than others, regardless of service provider. Comprehensive institutions make most frequent use of conferences and publications or research reports on student assessment. A smaller proportion have used training

workshops from one or more providers while consultation services are least likely to have been used. Compared to all institutions in our study, comprehensive institutions make greater use of publications or research reports on assessment provided by professional associations and regional accreditation associations.

Table 1. Institutional Use of External Services to Support Student Assessment by Service Provider

	% of Institutions Using									
	Services not used or not available		Consultation services		Assessment conferences		Training workshops		Publications or research reports	
External Service Provider	Comp	All	Comp	All	Comp	All	Comp	All	Comp	All
Professional associations	20	29	20	13	60	51	36	32	61	51
Regional accrediting association	19	30	20	19	47	41	39	32	56	45
State-level agency	57	54	8	14	27	26	16	22	23	22
Consortium of institutions	51	53	10	13	35	30	16	18	21	20

Summary Observations

The previous sections have addressed the influence of external constituencies, particularly state agencies and regional accreditation associations, on comprehensive institutions' undergraduate student assessment efforts.

State-level efforts clearly play an important role in student assessment. Half of comprehensive institutions in our study reported they are subject to some form of state plan or requirements for undergraduate student assessment and have undergone a state review of their student assessment plan or process. Assessment plans are more likely to have been developed through the joint efforts of state and institutional representatives. Based on our respondents' reports, there is a tendency for state reporting requirements to be centralized (greater use of state than institutional indicators of student performance) and input-oriented (requiring evidence of an institutional assessment plan rather than institutional uses of assessment information). Comprehensive institutions most often perceived state requirements as having had a positive influence on their institution's assessment activities.

However, regional accreditation associations appear to be a source of even stronger and more positive support for comprehensive institutions' engagement in student assessment activities. Regional accreditors more often require evidence of institutions' intended or actual uses of student assessment information do than state reporting requirements. This pattern of reporting requirements may be more conducive to building institutional support for and use of student assessment than the more accountability oriented approaches employed by state-level officials. And compared to state assessment requirements, regional accreditation requirements are more often viewed as having been a positive influence and less often reported as having had no influence or a negative influence on institutions' assessment efforts. These findings support past research concerning the strong role of regional accrediting associations in promoting student assessment in postsecondary institutions.

Finally, comprehensive institutions have made little use of external sources of support for student assessment. Most have not received external funds to improve their student assessment efforts. They are more likely to make use of conferences and publications on student assessment provided by professional associations and regional accreditation associations.

4. APPROACHES TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Addresses the type or content of student assessment measures used by institutions, the timing of those assessments, their use of standardized instruments and less traditional student assessment methods, and types of assessment studies conducted and student performance reports produced. Comprehensive institutions most often collect data on students' basic college-readiness skills, academic intentions, academic progress and satisfaction with the institution, and least often collect data on current students' higher-order cognitive skills, vocational skills, and personal growth, and former students' civic or social roles.

Assessment approach decisions may be influenced by external mandates, institutional context, and domains of the organizational and administrative environment. An institution's assessment approach may shape the uses and impacts of assessment information. Assessment scholars contend that institutions that collect comprehensive student assessment information — those that collect data on various dimensions of student performance, at multiple points in time, through a variety of assessment methods — and that conduct and report a variety of analyses of assessment data are more likely to use and achieve positive impacts from student assessment data.

What approaches to student assessment have comprehensive colleges and universities adopted? The first section of the ISSA instrument addressed the type or content of student assessment measures used by institutions, the timing of those assessments, their use of standardized instruments and less traditional student assessment methods, and types of assessment studies conducted and student performance reports produced. Here we examine the profile of student assessment approaches in comprehensive institutions and compare it to the profile for all types of postsecondary institutions.

Type and Extent of Student Data Collected

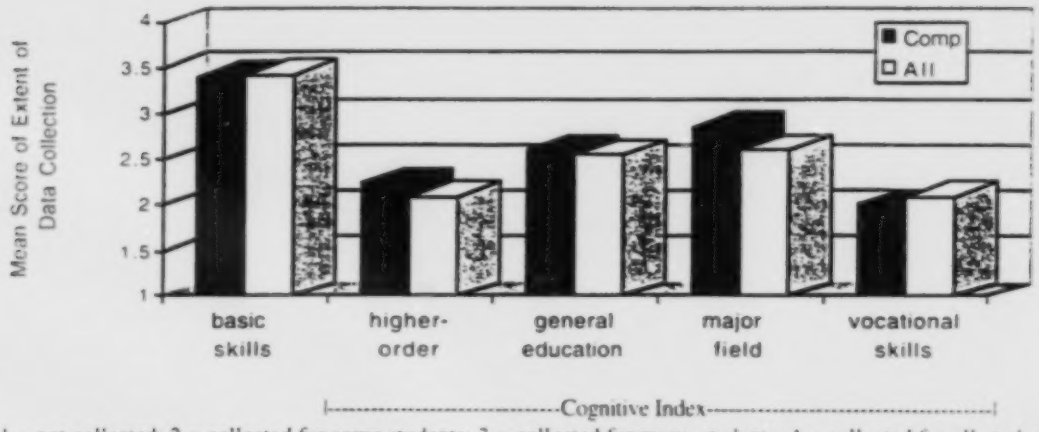
Data Collected from Current Students

What types of data do institutions collect from their students? Survey respondents reported the extent to which their institution collects ten types of student data for currently enrolled students and four measures for former students. Figures 10, 11 and 12 display mean scores for the extent to which comprehensive institutions and all institutions collect these data.

Cognitive Data. Figure 10 shows the extent to which institutions collect five types of cognitive data: basic college-readiness skills, higher-order skills (e.g., critical thinking and problem solving), general education competencies, competence in major field of study (discipline- or program-specific knowledge), and vocational or professional skills. The latter four of these five types of data factored together to create a "cognitive assessment" index that we used in regression analyses presented in section eight.

Comprehensive institutions conduct extensive collection of data on students' basic college-readiness skills. The mean score for this measure (3.40) shows this type of data is collected for many to all students. This emphasis is understandable given that students entering these institutions may vary considerably in their academic abilities. In contrast, comprehensive institutions collect less data on other measures of their current students' cognitive performance. Data on students' competencies in their major field and general education are collected from some to many students (mean scores of 2.86 and 2.61 respectively), but most comprehensive institutions collect data on vocational and higher-order skills from only some of their students (mean score of 2.00). They place greater

Figure 10. Extent of Cognitive Data Collected on Current Students



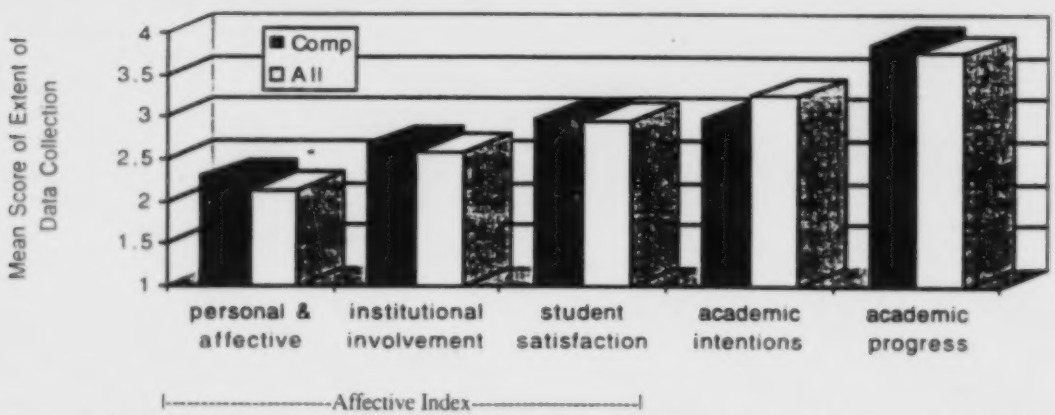
1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students

emphasis on assessing major field competencies than do all institutions. Beyond this, there were no large differences in their extent of data collection for these cognitive measures compared to all institutions.

Affective and Behavioral Data. Figure 11 presents five types of affective and behavioral data collected from currently enrolled students: personal growth and affective development, student experiences and involvement with the institution, student satisfaction with the institution, students' academic intentions, and students' academic progress. The first three of these items factored together into an "affective assessment" index that we used in regression analyses presented in section eight.

Comprehensive institutions collect data on the academic progress of almost all their students (mean score of 3.86). This type of data is a common component of routine internal record-keeping. However, they are less likely to collect data on students' academic intentions (mean score of 2.99). It is probably easier to monitor academic progress via transcripts and other institutional data than

Figure 11. Extent of Affective and Behavioral Data Collected on Current Students



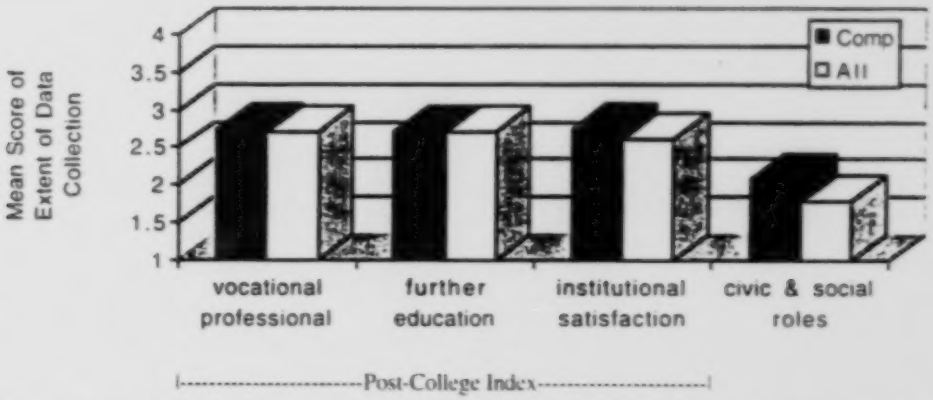
1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students.

it is to collect and update information on students' goals. Comprehensive institutions ask many students about their satisfaction with the institution (mean score of 2.97). Comprehensive institutions collect less information on aspects of their students' experiences and involvement within the institution, doing so for only some students (mean score of 2.68), and many do not collect data on students' personal growth and affective development (mean score of 2.00). Compared to all institutions participating in our study, comprehensive institutions place less emphasis on assessing student academic intentions or expectations.

Data Collected from Former Students

Figure 12 displays mean scores for the extent to which comprehensive institutions and all institutions collect four types of data from former students: vocational or professional outcomes (e.g., job attainment or performance), further education (e.g., transfer, degree attainment, graduate study), satisfaction and experiences with the institution after leaving, and civic or social roles (e.g., political, social or community involvement). These latter three items factored together to create a "post-college" index used in regression analyses presented in section eight.

Figure 12. Extent of Data Collected on Former Students



1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students.

Comprehensive institutions report moderately extensive collection of data on three dimensions of former students' performance or development. Measures of vocational outcomes, further education and satisfaction with the institution are collected from some to many of their former students (mean scores of 2.75, 2.71 and 2.75 respectively). However, they are comparatively less likely to collect data concerning former students' civic or social roles, doing so for only some students (mean score of 2.08). This lower emphasis on civic and social outcomes is likely attributable to the evaluation criteria applied to these institutions by a variety of constituencies. Prospective students and their parents, employers, accreditors and state-level officials are more likely to evaluate comprehensive institutions' performance on the basis of whether or not graduates attain field-related employment, are accepted into doctoral and research universities for further study, and are satisfied with their educational experiences than on graduates' citizenship skills and activities.

The profile of data collection from former students by comprehensive institutions closely resembles the profile reported by respondents from all types of institutions. Comprehensive institutions do collect more extensive data concerning former students' civic and social roles. They

also collect more extensive on former students' satisfaction than do all other types of institutions but this difference is not of great practical significance.

Timing of Data Collection

Researchers have stressed that it is particularly important for institutions to collect student assessment data at varying points in time in order to assure that students are meeting their academic goals and that the college experience is "value-added." When are comprehensive institutions collecting student assessment data? Table 2 presents the timing of data collection efforts for each of nine measures of student performance for comprehensive and all institutions. Institutional respondents told us whether they collect data for each measure at entry, during students' enrollment, and/or at exit. Respondents could choose all three of these options for each type of data.

Table 2. Institutions Collecting Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Student Assessment Data at Entry, While Student is Enrolled, and at Exit

	% Institutions Collecting Data					
	At Entry		While Enrolled		At Exit	
Data Collected	Comp	All	Comp	All	Comp	All
Cognitive Data						
Basic Skills	96	97	23	21	7	8
Higher Order Skills	36	32	70	66	34	33
General Education	29	32	73	64	33	36
Major Competence	7	9	63	62	72	64
Vocational Skills	7	10	69	67	67	60
Affective and Behavioral Data						
Personal Growth	36	32	68	67	44	41
Student Involvement	6	7	73	72	55	55
Student Satisfaction	6	7	76	71	67	65
Academic Intentions	86	92	41	36	19	19

Timing of Collecting Cognitive Data

With the exception of basic skills data, most cognitive data are collected either while the student is enrolled or at exit. It is not surprising that most comprehensive institutions that collect basic skills data do so at the point of entry into the institution (96%). However, it is somewhat surprising that less than one-quarter (23%) of these institutions report that basic skills are assessed while the student is enrolled. More than half of comprehensive institutions that collect data on students' higher-order cognitive skills, general education competencies, competencies in the major and vocational skills do so while the student is enrolled (ranging from 63% to 73% of institutions). Most comprehensive institutions also collect data on exiting students' competencies in the major (72%) and vocational skills (67%). In fact, comprehensive institutions collect this exit information from their students more often than do all institutions in our study.

At first glance, these data suggest that comprehensive institutions are assessing their students' major competencies and vocational skills at more than one point in time. But in actuality, less than one-third (30%) of comprehensive institutions are collecting major competence data from their students *both* while they are enrolled and at exit, and less than one-quarter (24%) do so for

vocational/professional skills. The remaining institutions are collecting major competence and vocational skills data *either* while their students are still enrolled *or* at exit.

Timing of Collecting Affective and Behavioral Data

With the exception of academic intentions, most affective data are collected either during enrollment or at exit. In terms of academic intentions, it again is not surprising that students' intentions are collected at entry (86%). It seems apparent that these intentions are less often assessed again, even though students' goals may change throughout their time at an institution. A large proportion of institutions report collecting data on students' personal growth, involvement and satisfaction with the institution during enrollment and at exit, but only one-third (35%) of institutions report collecting any of these types of data *both* while students are enrolled *and* at exit. There are no notable differences between the timing of comprehensive institutions' data collection efforts and those of all institutions in our study.

Student Assessment Instruments and Methods Used

Institutions engaging in student assessment efforts must select the means by which assessment data will be collected. A traditional choice is to use assessment instruments, generally in the form of objective examinations or inventories administered in a pencil and paper or computerized format. More recently, there has been growing interest in alternative methods of assessing students. These non-traditional methods tend to be more qualitative or integrative in approach — requiring students to demonstrate higher-order cognitive skills such as application or synthesis — or may use sources of information other than students themselves. Further, as the student body entering postsecondary institutions becomes more diverse through the increased enrollment of part-time, older and minority students, some scholars have suggested the need to use special assessment methods to reflect the unique characteristics, learning styles, needs and life situations of various sub-populations of students.

Student Assessment Instruments

How are institutions collecting student assessment data? Survey respondents reported whether their institution uses instruments or tests to collect any of ten types of assessment information: nine for current students (basic college-readiness skills; higher-order skills; general education competencies; competence in major field of study; vocational or professional skills; personal growth and affective development; experiences and involvement with the institution; satisfaction with the institution; and academic intentions) and one for former students (alumni satisfaction and experiences). If an instrument was used, respondents specified its source — institutionally-developed, state-provided, or commercially available. Figures 13 and 14 present information on these eleven types of assessment information collected via traditional instruments or tests for comprehensive institutions and all institutions in our study.

As Figures 13 and 14 show, the use of assessment instruments or tests varies with the type of assessment data being collected. Comprehensive institutions are most likely to use instruments or inventories to collect data on student and alumni satisfaction (97% and 96% respectively), basic college-readiness skills (95%), and major field competencies (91%) and least likely to use them to collect data on students' vocational or professional skills (63%), higher-order cognitive skills (66%), and general education competencies (69%).

When an instrument is used, it has most often been developed by the comprehensive institution itself (data concerning the source of instruments for each type of data are available in Appendix A of this report). This is especially true for instruments measuring aspects of student performance or experiences that are specific to the institution such as alumni satisfaction, student satisfaction, student effort and experiences, and competence in the major. Conversely,

comprehensive institutions make slightly higher use of commercially-available instruments for measuring basic college-readiness skills and higher-order cognitive skills. These measures are both more uniform across campus settings and more complex to develop. Comprehensive institutions make limited use of state-provided instruments, suggesting that such instruments are not a part of state-level requirements for student assessment.

Figure 13. Institutional Use of Student Assessment Instruments to Collect Cognitive Data

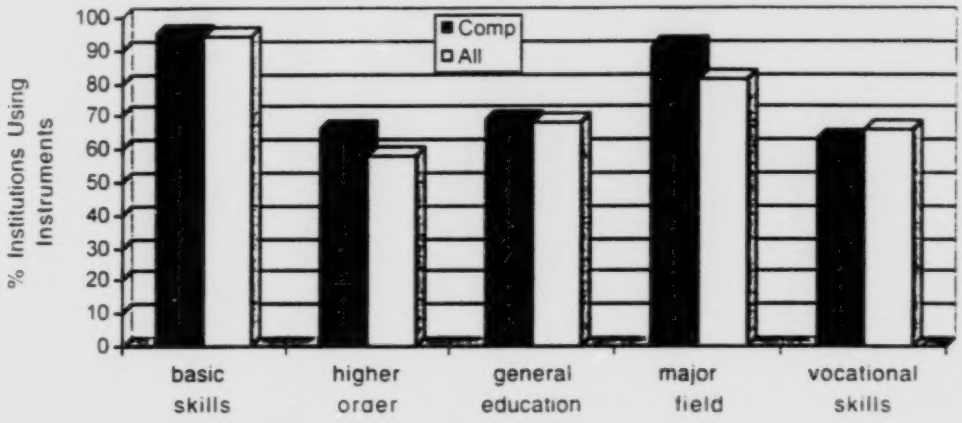
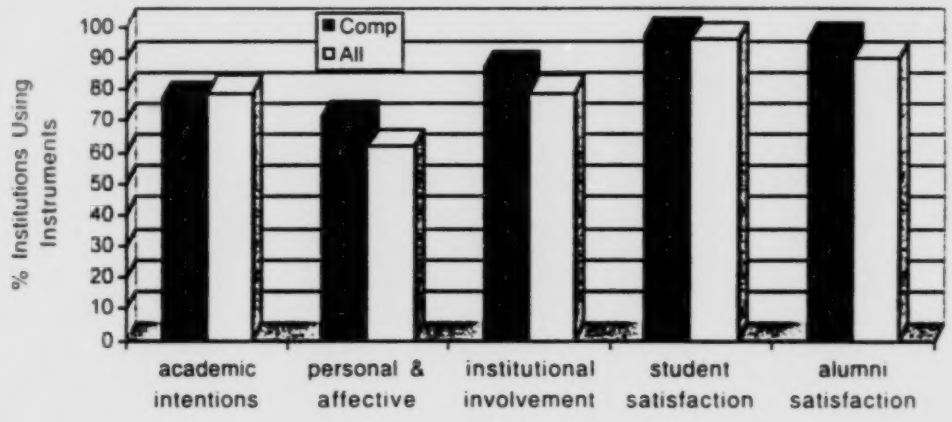


Figure 14. Institutional Use of Student Assessment Instruments to Collect Affective and Behavioral Data



Comprehensive institutions do differ from all institutions in a few aspects of their use of assessment instruments and tests. Compared to all institutions, they make greater use of institutionally-developed instruments to collect data on students' basic college-readiness skills and competencies in the major, and more often use commercially-available instruments to collect data on students' major field competencies. This greater emphasis on major field competencies reflects the professional preparation focus of these institutions relative to other types.

Other Student Assessment Methods

Institutions also reported the extent to which they use each of nine alternative methods of student assessment. Table 3 presents this information for comprehensive institutions and all institutions. Four of these options require more active participation of currently enrolled students and factored together to create a "student-centered" index of assessment methods that we used in regression analyses presented in section eight: observations of student performance, student portfolios or comprehensive projects, capstone courses, and student interviews or focus groups. None is used extensively by comprehensive institutions. Of these four methods, comprehensive institutions are most likely to use capstone courses (mean score of 2.41) and observations of student performance (mean score of 2.24)— doing so in some to most units or departments.

Table 3. Mean Scores of Extent of Use of Other Student Assessment Methods

Student Assessment Methods	Comprehensives (n=314)	All Institutions (n=1393)
Student-Centered		
Observations of student performance	2.24	2.26
Student portfolios or comprehensive projects	2.18	2.10
Student performance in capstone courses	2.41	2.15
Student interviews or focus groups	1.98	1.84
Externally-Oriented		
Alumni interviews or focus groups	2.03	1.90
Employer interviews or focus groups	1.87	1.87
Other		
Transcript analysis	2.13	2.16
External examination of students	1.08	2.02
Surveys or interviews with withdrawing students	2.35	2.40

1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units

Two of these alternative measures rely on information from external groups or sources and factored together to create an indices of "external methods" of student assessment that we used in regression analyses in section eight: alumni interviews or focus groups, and employer interviews or focus groups. Comprehensive institutions are slightly more likely to interview or hold focus groups with alumni (mean score of 2.03) than with employers (1.87), but do not make extensive use of either method.

Three additional alternative student assessment measures were listed in our survey: transcript analysis, using external examinations, and surveying or interviewing withdrawing students. Of these three, comprehensive institutions are most likely to survey/interview withdrawing students (2.35) followed by the use of transcript analysis (2.13). Of all the alternative methods considered here, comprehensive institutions are least likely to use external examinations such as licensure examinations as a method of collecting assessment data (1.08). It appears that comprehensive institutions consider former students to be more important referent group for assessment purposes than employers or professional/disciplinary groups.

Compared to all institutions participating in our study, comprehensive institutions make greater use of capstone courses as an assessment method. However, they only use this method in some to most of their units. Conversely, they make much less use of external examination data. Other alternative assessment methods are not used to any greater or lesser extent by comprehensive institutions compared to all institutions.

Assessment Methods for Student Sub-Populations

Do institutions use different assessment methods for specific sub-populations of their student body? Table 4 presents the percentage of comprehensive institutions and all institutions using different assessment methods for four student sub-populations: adult students, part-time students, minority students, and distance education students.

Table 4. Institutional Use of Different Assessment Methods for Different Student Sub-Populations

	% Institutions Using Different Assessment Methods	
Student Sub-Population	Comprehensives (n=311)	All Institutions (n=1366)
Adult students	16	10
Part-time students	5	5
Minority students	3	2
Distance education students	25	22

Most comprehensive institutions do not use different assessment methods for specific sub-populations of undergraduate students. While one-quarter (25%) report using different methods for distance education students, a decision that may be necessitated by the type of medium used for course delivery, very few use special methods for collecting assessment data from their adult, part-time or minority students. This profile is consistent across all types of postsecondary institutions.

Student Assessment Studies and Reports

Beyond collecting descriptive data on their students' characteristics, performance or development, institutions must consider how to transform that data into useful information. Institutions that study the relationship between various aspects of students' institutional experiences and their performance will be better able to make informed decisions concerning academic and student-related policies and practices. Another consideration in data analysis is the level of aggregation at which assessment information is analyzed and reported.

Student Assessment Studies

Are institutions studying how student performance is connected to experiences with the institution? In our survey, we asked if institutions conduct studies of the relationship between students' performance and nine areas of students' institutional experiences. Table 5 identifies these areas and presents data on institutional studies for both comprehensive institutions and all institutions in our study.

Fully one-third of comprehensive institutions (35%) do not conduct any of these studies of students' institutional experiences. When studies are conducted, they are most likely to examine the relationship of admissions policies (52%), residence arrangements (32%), financial aid and employment (31%), and extra-curricular involvement (30%) to students' performance. In fact, comprehensive institutions conduct studies of the first two of these areas much more often than do all institutions.

Nearly one-third (29%) of comprehensive institutions study the relationship of academic advising to student performance. However, they are much less likely to study the relationship between students' performance and other aspects of students' experiences that are more directly related to the teaching/learning environment such as interaction with faculty (13%), academic resources (14%) and exposure to various types of teaching methods (19%). Arguably, studies of these relationships may produce information that could have a greater impact on student

performance but they are also more politically sensitive for institutions to conduct. Or it may be that studies of this nature are primarily conducted by faculty members within their own classrooms rather than by a central committee or institutional office: such studies would not have been reported in this institutional-level instrument.

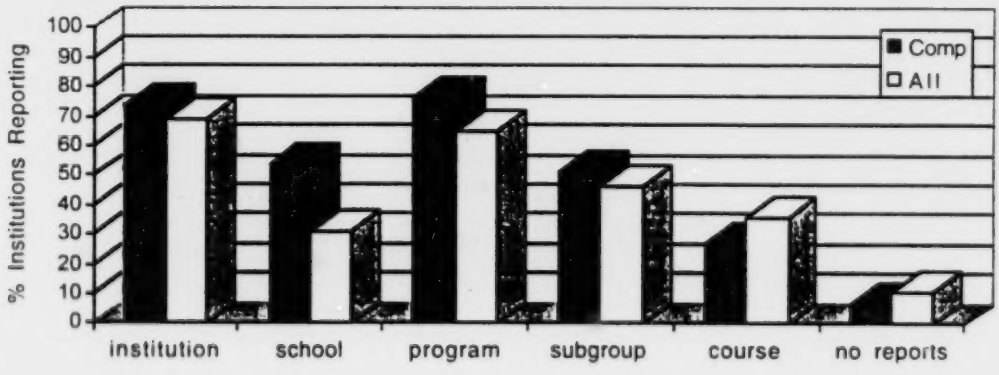
Table 5. Institutions Conducting Student Assessment Studies

Studies of Relationship Between Student Performance and the Following Experiences	% Institutions Conducting Studies	
	Comprehensives (n=302)	All Institutions (n=1264)
Do not study any of these relationships	35	38
Admission standards or policies	52	42
Residence arrangements	32	21
Student financial aid and/or concurrent employment	31	30
Extra-curricular activities	30	24
Academic advising patterns	29	26
Student course-taking patterns	24	26
Exposure to different instructional or teaching methods	19	21
Classroom, library and/or computing resources	14	17
Patterns of student-faculty interaction	13	14

Student Assessment Profiles or Reports

Finally, institutions were asked to report the levels of aggregation at which they provide profiles or reports of student assessment information. Figure 15 shows the percentage of comprehensive institutions and all institutions providing student assessment reports at each of five levels of aggregation: institution wide; schools or colleges; academic programs or departments; special populations of students; course or groups of courses. Respondents indicated as many levels of aggregation as were applicable or could indicate that they provide no reports of student assessment information.

Figure 15. Preparation of Student Performance Reports by Level of Aggregation



Most comprehensive institutions do provide some type of reports of student assessment results (93%). The majority provide such reports on data for the institution as a whole (74%) and

aggregated by academic programs or departments (76%). Half prepare reports at the level of schools and colleges (54%) and for specific sub-populations of students (51%). They are least likely to aggregate and report assessment information at the course level (27%).

Compared to all institutions, comprehensive institutions are more likely to provide reports at the school or college level, and by academic programs or departments. This suggests that the interpretation of student assessment data may be more decentralized in these institutions, with schools and/or departments having the responsibility to decide what assessment results mean and what to do with them than is the case for all postsecondary institutions.

Summary Observations

In summary, comprehensive institutions tend to collect more extensive data on cognitive rather than affective or behavioral measures, and from current rather than former students. These findings are partly reflective of institutional mission. Unlike the tendency of associate of arts institutions to emphasize vocational preparation and liberal arts colleges to focus on students' cognitive and affective development, comprehensive institutions emphasize students' acquisition of professional or disciplinary knowledge. However, this data collection profile may also be partly attributable to the ease or difficulty of collecting various types of data. Measures of academic progress and basic skills are easier for institutions to define, quantify and collect than more complex measures such as higher-order cognitive skills and affective development. Overall, the profile of data collection within comprehensive institutions closely resembles the profile reported by respondents from all types of postsecondary institutions. Compared to other types of institutions, comprehensive institutions generally fall in the mid-range of scores; some differences are evident but these are seldom large.

Comprehensive institutions make great use of instruments or inventories to collect assessment data and most often develop these instruments themselves. Overall, they make limited use of non-traditional assessment methods such as portfolios and capstone courses.

Compared to all institutions, comprehensive institutions have a moderately strong profile of analyzing and reporting student assessment data. However, studies are more likely to examine the influence of non-instructional factors such as admissions or financial aid policies on student performance than faculty-related factors. A greater proportion of comprehensive institutions, and all institutions, provide descriptive reports of student performance — most often aggregated at the institution-wide or department level.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

5. ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PATTERNS

Focuses on the patterns of organizational and administrative support that institutions have developed to promote student assessment on their campuses, such as their mission and purpose, institution-wide activities, leadership support, and planning and coordinating mechanisms. Many comprehensive institutions have adopted a decentralized approach to assessment policies and planning — permitting academic units to develop their own assessment activities and involving faculty in planning and overseeing assessment activities.

An important focus of our study was to examine the patterns of organizational and administrative support institutions have developed to promote student assessment on their campuses. The assessment literature suggests that institutions will be most likely to promote internal support for assessment if they engage in assessment for internal rather than external purposes, have visible and strong leadership support for assessment, include a broad range of internal participants, particularly faculty, in making assessment-related decisions and regularly evaluate their assessment programs. It is expected that organizational and administrative support will shape the assessment approach, assessment management policies and practices, and ultimately, the institutional uses and impacts of assessment information.

The ISSA instrument included questions concerning the institution-wide assessment support strategy; administrative and governance activities used to promote student assessment; leadership and faculty support for assessment; planning and coordination for assessment; and evaluation of student assessment processes. Once again, we will present information concerning the pattern of organizational and administrative support for student assessment in comprehensive institutions and compare it to the pattern for all types of postsecondary institutions.

Institution-Wide Assessment Support Strategy

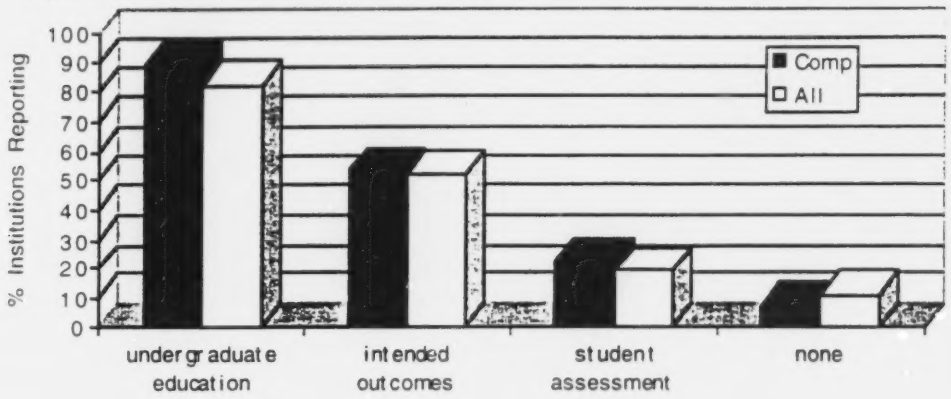
Mission Emphasis

Assessment scholars and practitioners suggest that institutions' academic mission content may symbolize the importance with which student assessment is regarded and so may influence the degree of internal support for assessment. What do the mission statements of our responding institutions tell us about their values regarding student assessment? Institutions reported whether their mission statement explicitly: a) emphasizes excellence in undergraduate education, b) identifies intended student outcomes, c) refers to student assessment as an important priority, or d) does not mention any of these. Respondents could answer "yes" to more than one mission statement component. Figure 16 displays the percentage of comprehensive institutions and all institutions reporting each of these mission statement components.

Despite their dual emphasis on graduate and undergraduate education, the majority of comprehensive colleges and universities report their mission statement explicitly emphasizes excellence in undergraduate education as an institutional priority (89%). However, just over half have mission statements that identify the educational outcomes intended for their students (53%) while less than one-quarter refer to student assessment as an important institutional activity within their mission statement (22%). Very few comprehensive institutions have none of these components in their mission statement (7%). Compared to all institutions, comprehensive institutions are more likely to emphasize undergraduate education, educational outcomes and student assessment in their mission statements. However, these differences are not large.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

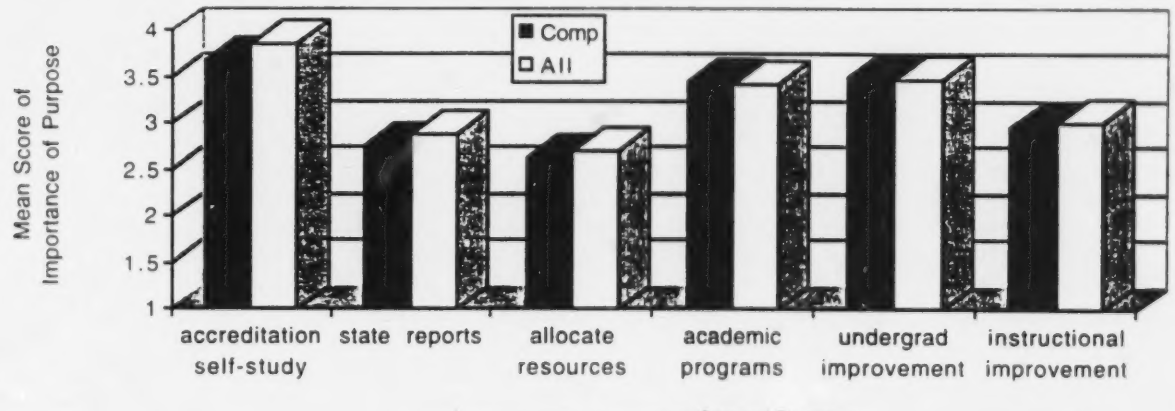
Figure 16. Institutional Mission Emphasis



Purposes for Engaging in Student Assessment

Why are institutions engaging in student assessment? A second dimension of institution-wide assessment support strategy examined in this study is the purpose(s) underlying institutions' student assessment efforts. Scholars contend that whether assessment is primarily engaged in for internal or external purposes may influence the nature of an institution's assessment approach, degree of internal support, and assessment uses and impacts. Institutions rated the importance of six purposes for engaging in student assessment: preparing for an institutional accreditation self-study; meeting state reporting requirements; guiding internal resource allocation decisions; guiding undergraduate academic program improvement; improving the achievement of undergraduate students; and improving faculty instructional performance. The last four of these purposes were factored together to create an "internal purposes" index that we used in regression analyses in section eight. Figure 17 presents the mean scores for each student assessment purpose for comprehensive institutions and for all institutions.

Figure 17. Purposes of Student Assessment



Scale: 1 = no importance; 2 = minor importance; 3 = moderate importance 4 = very important.

Comprehensive colleges and universities rate preparing for an institutional accreditation self-study (3.67), improving the achievement of undergraduate students (3.50), and guiding

undergraduate academic program improvement (3.46) as very important reasons for engaging in student assessment. These findings suggest regional accrediting associations play an important role in stimulating institutions' decisions to engage in student assessment. To a slightly lesser extent, comprehensive institutions intend their student assessment efforts to contribute to improvements in academic and student performance.

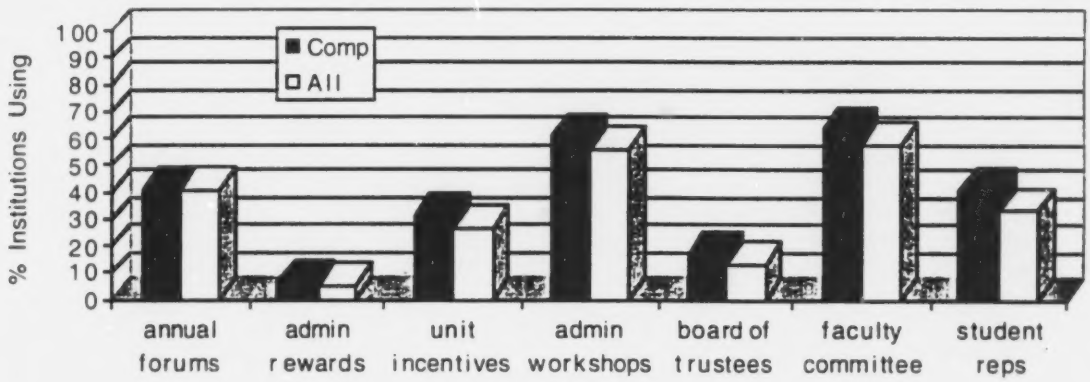
Conversely, comprehensive institutions give the lowest importance ratings to guiding internal resource allocation decisions (2.62), meeting state reporting requirements (2.76) and improving faculty instructional performance (2.95) as student assessment purposes. All are rated as being of minor to moderate importance. It appears that student assessment efforts in comprehensive institutions are more often intended for improvement purposes than to address issues of external or internal accountability. The relatively low importance rating given to improving faculty instructional performance may stem from the moderate degree of faculty autonomy in these institutions.

Compared to all institutions, comprehensive institutions accord slightly less importance to preparing for accreditation self-studies and meeting state requirements as student assessment purposes. This suggests these external constituencies may have slightly less influence over student assessment efforts in comprehensive institutions than other types of institutions.

Institution-Wide Administrative and Governance Activities

Institutions may develop a variety of administrative activities and governance structures to promote student assessment on an institution-wide basis. How prevalent are these practices? The ISSA instrument asked whether or not institutions use any of the following administrative activities and governance structures: annual institution-wide initiatives on assessment; rewards or incentives for academic and student affairs administrators to use student assessment in their unit; incentives for academic units to use assessment information in evaluation and improvement efforts; student assessment workshops for academic and student affairs administrators; board of trustees committee that addresses student assessment; faculty governance committee that addresses student assessment issues; and student representation on student assessment committees. Figure 18 displays the percentage of comprehensive institutions and all institutions that have introduced these activities or structures in their institutions.

Figure 18. Institution-Wide Administrative and Governance Activities Used to Promote Student Assessment



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

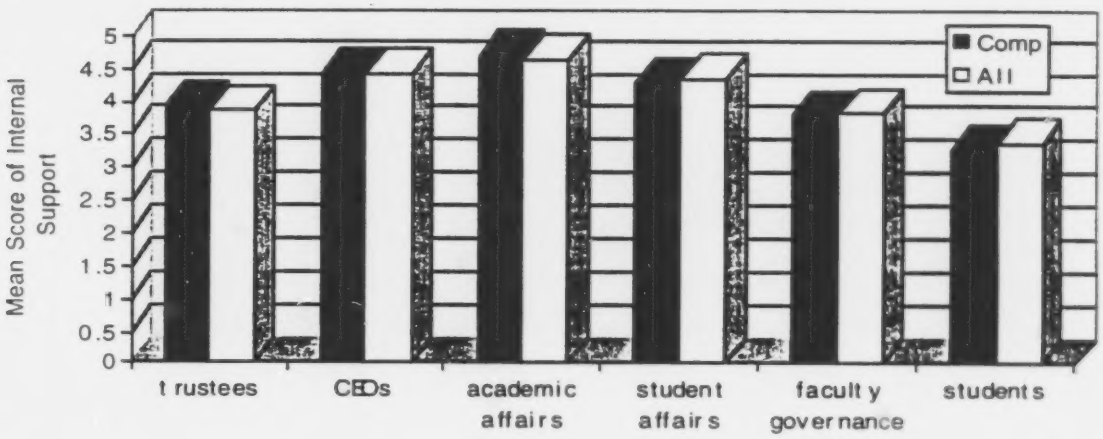
Of the various activities listed, comprehensive institutions are most likely to have a faculty governance committee that addresses student assessment issues (64%) and to provide workshops on student assessment for their academic and student affairs administrators (61%). A smaller proportion use annual institution-wide initiatives on assessment (41%), have student representation on student assessment committees (41%) and offer incentives for academic units to use assessment information in improvement efforts (31%). Comprehensive institutions are much less likely to have a board of trustees committee focused on student assessment (17%) and least likely to offer rewards or incentives to individual administrators who promote student assessment (7%).

Relative to all institutions, comprehensive institutions are slightly more likely to involve faculty and students in assessment decision-making. Their use of the remaining administrative and governance activities basically parallels that of all institutions.

Leadership and Faculty Support for Student Assessment

The degree to which student assessment efforts are supported internally is likely an important determinant of the extent and impact of an institution's student assessment activities. How supportive of student assessment are various internal constituencies? We asked survey respondents to rate the degree to which six internal groups support undergraduate student assessment activities: board of trustees; chief executive officer; academic affairs administrators; student affairs administrators; faculty governance; and students. Figure 19 presents the mean responses to this question for comprehensive institutions and all institutions in our study.

Figure 19. Internal Constituent Support for Student Assessment



Scale: 1 = very unsupportive; 2 = somewhat unsupportive; 3 = neutral, unknown; 4 = somewhat supportive; 5 = very supportive

Comprehensive institutions have generally high levels of support for student assessment with most constituents reported as being at least somewhat supportive. Academic affairs administrators are perceived as the most supportive constituency followed by the chief executive officer and student affairs administrators. Boards of trustees and faculty governance bodies are viewed as slightly less supportive in relation to senior administrators but are still rated as supportive. Students are seen as being least supportive of student assessment with most respondents reporting their level of support as neutral or unknown. This finding may warrant further attention given scholars' concerns about the need to actively promote student participation

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

in assessment activities. In all cases, comprehensive institutions report their constituent groups as being equally supportive of assessment as those in all institutions in our study.

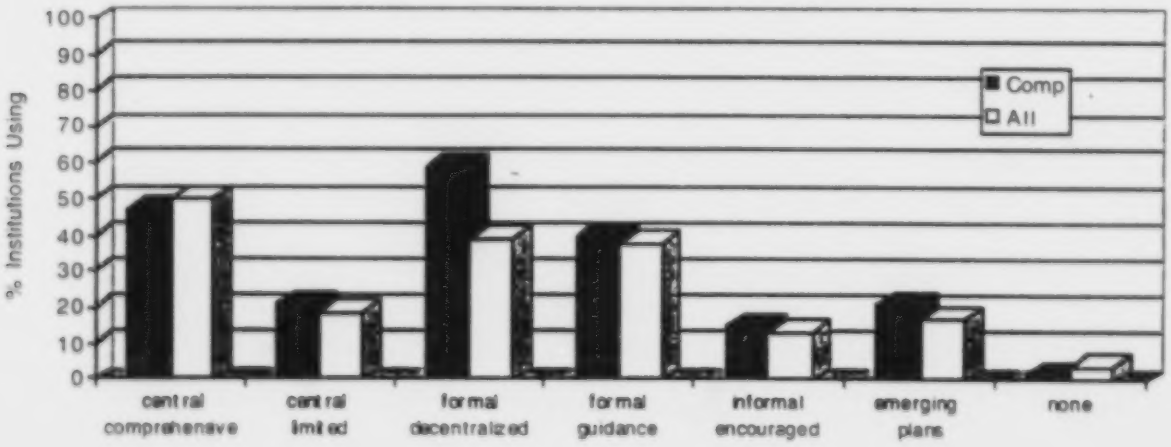
Planning and Coordinating Student Assessment

A central issue in discussions of leadership and governance for student assessment concerns the degree to which responsibility for planning and coordinating student assessment activities is centralized or decentralized within institutions. Centralized approaches that focus such responsibility on senior administrators or central offices may signal that assessment is a valued institutional activity but decentralized approaches involving an array of internal participants may do more to promote broader internal support for assessment. How do institutions plan and coordinate their assessment efforts? We asked institutional respondents about six aspects of their assessment planning and coordination process: the nature of an institutional plan or policy for student assessment; membership on an institution-wide planning group for assessment; executive responsibility for the assessment planning process; approval authority for assessment plans; operational responsibility for student assessment; and reporting patterns.

Institutional Plan or Policy for Student Assessment

We asked survey respondents which of seven types of institutional plans or policies for student assessment best described what exists at their institution: 1) formal comprehensive centralization — a formally adopted plan or policy specifying undergraduate student assessment activities for all academic programs or units; 2) formal limited centralization — a formally adopted plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment in some academic programs or units; 3) formal decentralization — a formally adopted institutional plan or policy requiring all academic units or programs to develop their own undergraduate student assessment plan; 4) formal guidance — a formally adopted institutional plan or policy identifying institution-wide activities to be conducted by a central committee or office; 5) informal encouragement — no institutional plan or policy but academic units or programs are encouraged to develop their own undergraduate student assessment activities; 6) emergent — institution is currently developing a plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment; and 7) none — institution does not have an undergraduate student assessment plan or policy. Respondents could select more than one type of plan or policy. Figure 20 presents the percentage of comprehensive institutions and all institutions in our study using each type of assessment plan or policy.

Figure 20. Types of Institutional Plan or Policy for Student Assessment



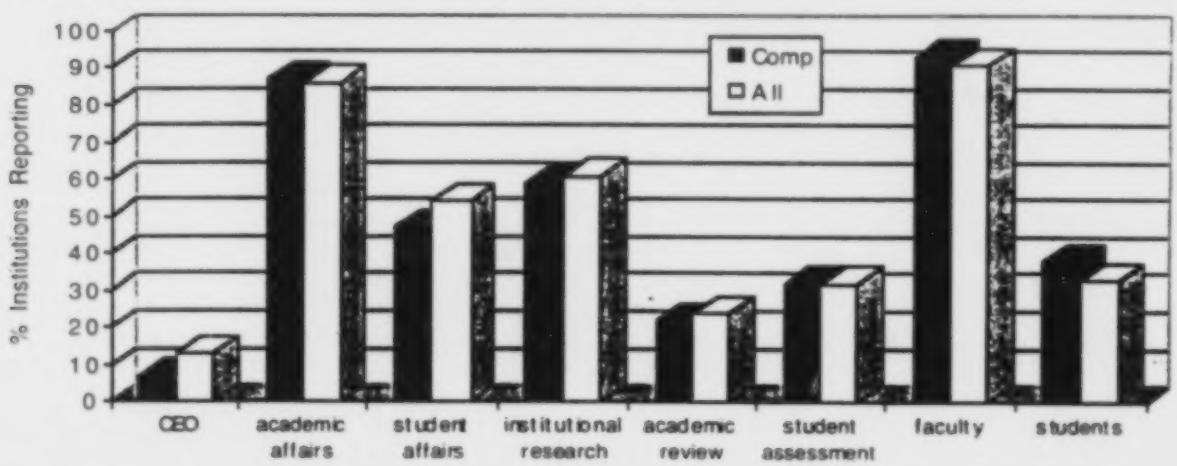
Virtually all comprehensive institutions have some type of institutional plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment. Almost half (47%) report having a plan specifying assessment activities of all academic units or program and two-fifths (40%) stipulate institution-wide assessment activities that are conducted by a central committee or position, but more than half (57%) require all academic units or programs to develop their own undergraduate student assessment plan. So it appears that while requirements to engage in student assessment are centrally stipulated, responsibility for determining the specific form these activities will take is often left to the discretion of academic units or programs. Comprehensive institutions are more likely than all institutions in our study to have adopted a decentralized assessment plan or policy. They make limited use of the other types of policies and plans considered in this question.

Institution-Wide Assessment Planning Group Membership

Who is involved in student assessment planning? We asked respondents whether they had an institution-wide group responsible for ongoing planning and policy setting for undergraduate assessment. Fully 73% of comprehensive institutions and 70% of all institutions report having such a group. Of those institutions with institution-wide planning groups, we asked which of the following internal constituents serves on the group: chief executive officer, academic affairs administrator or staff, student affairs administrator or staff, institutional research administrator or staff, academic review and evaluation administrator or staff, student assessment administrator or staff, faculty, and students. Respondents checked as many constituents as were applicable. Figure 21 presents the percentage of comprehensive institutions and all institutions that responded that each constituent is a member of their assessment planning group.

When comprehensive colleges and universities have institution-wide planning committees for student assessment, these committees are predominantly comprised of faculty (93%) and academic affairs administrators (87%). Institutional research personnel (59%), student affairs administrators (47%) and students (38%) are represented to a lesser degree. It is least likely for the chief executive officer (7%) and for personnel with specific responsibilities for academic review/evaluation (22%) or student assessment (32%) to be included. The latter two positions are uncommon within comprehensive institutions. This membership profile suggests that student assessment planning is primarily positioned as an academic affairs responsibility. This holds true for both comprehensive institutions and for all institutions in our study.

Figure 21. Membership on Institution-Wide Student Assessment Planning Group*



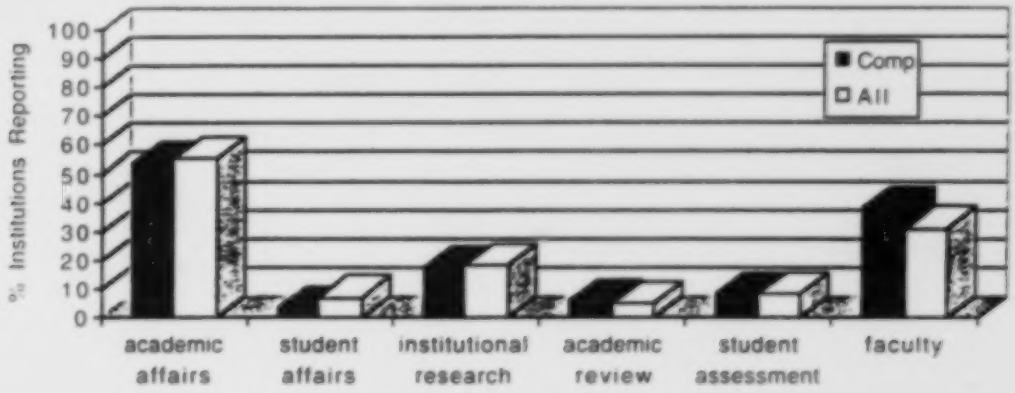
*Only institutions with an institution-wide planning group for student assessment responded to this question.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Executive Responsibility for Assessment Planning Process

Another measure of the governance process used for student assessment concerns where formal leadership for assessment planning is vested in an institution. We asked institutions which of the following positions has executive responsibility for or chairs the institution-wide group for student assessment planning: academic affairs administrator; student affairs administrator; institutional research officer; academic review and evaluation officer; student assessment officer; or faculty member. Figure 22 presents this information for comprehensive institutions and all institutions.

Figure 22. Executive Responsibility for Student Assessment Planning Group*



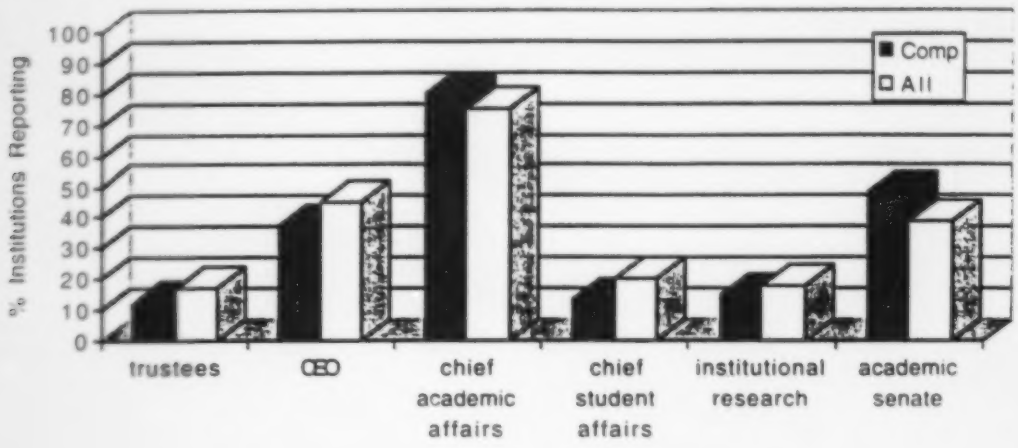
*Only institutions with an institution-wide planning group for student assessment responded to this question.

Executive responsibility for student assessment planning in comprehensive institutions is most often placed in the hands of an academic administrator (54%), followed by a faculty member (38%). It is less common for student affairs administrators or for personnel from institutional research, academic review and evaluation or student assessment to hold this position. Compared to all institutions, comprehensive institutions are slightly more likely to vest executive responsibility for planning in a faculty member (38% of comprehensive institutions versus 31% of all institutions).

Approval Authority for Student Assessment Plan

As a final aspect of governance for assessment planning, we asked institutions to identify who, among ten possible positions or groups, approves changes in their institutional plan or policy for student assessment: board of trustees; chief executive officer; chief academic affairs officer; chief student affairs officer; institutional research officer; academic review and evaluation officer; student assessment officer; student government; academic senate or other faculty committee; and faculty union. All respondents could answer this question regardless of whether or not they had an institution-wide committee for assessment planning. Respondents indicated as many positions or groups as were applicable. Less than 10% of comprehensive institutions report that academic review and evaluation, student assessment, student government or faculty union personnel have approval authority for assessment planning. Figure 23 presents the results for the remaining six positions for comprehensive institutions and all institutions.

Figure 23. Approval Authority for Student Assessment Plan or Policies



Changes to student assessment plans or policies have to be approved by multiple sources. However, comprehensive institutions most often give approval authority to the chief academic affairs officer (80%). In terms of frequency, faculty members are the internal constituency mentioned next (48%) followed by the chief executive officer (37%). There is minimal involvement of other administrative or research/evaluation positions, or the board of trustees in this aspect of assessment governance. Compared to all institutions, comprehensive institutions are more likely to involve the academic senate or other faculty committees and less likely to include the chief executive officer in approving changes to the institutional assessment plan or policy.

Operational Responsibility for Day-to-Day Student Assessment Activities

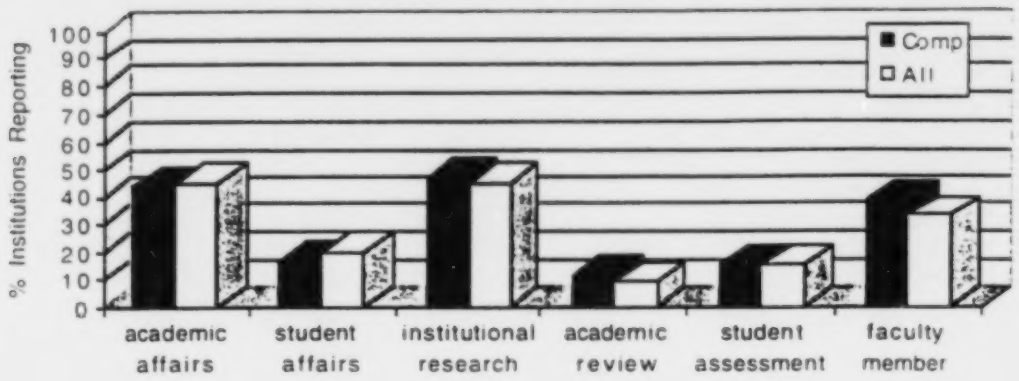
Beyond the planning phase of student assessment, institutions must decide where to place responsibility for overseeing their day-to-day undergraduate student assessment activities such as instrument development, data collection, analysis and reporting. Where have institutions placed operational responsibility for student assessment? We asked institutions which of six positions or offices has responsibility for day-to-day student assessment activities: academic affairs administrator; student affairs administrator; institutional research officer; academic review and evaluation officer; student assessment officer; and faculty member(s). Institutions checked as many positions/offices as applied. Figure 24 presents the results for comprehensive institutions and all institutions.

Comprehensive institutions most often hold institutional research personnel responsible for their day-to-day student assessment activities (47%), a finding that makes sense given the measurement and statistical proficiency required for executing these tasks. However, this responsibility is also frequently given to academic affairs administrators (44%) and faculty members (39%). Conversely, comprehensive institutions are less likely to have a student affairs administrator, academic review/evaluation officer or student assessment officer in charge of their day-to-day assessment activities. Comprehensive institutions are slightly more likely to call upon faculty members to manage the daily operations of student assessment than all institutions in our study.

Reporting Relationship of Individual with Operating Responsibility for Student Assessment

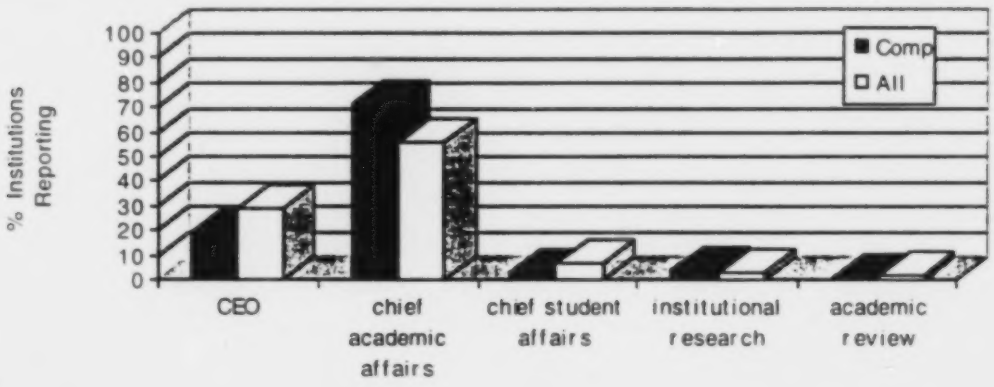
Finally, institutions were asked to whom the individual with day-to-day operating responsibility for student assessment reports. Survey respondents selected from the following five

Figure 24. Operating Responsibility for Day-to-Day Student Assessment Activities



offices: chief executive officer; chief academic officer; chief student affairs officer; institutional research officer; and academic review and evaluation officer. Figure 25 presents the responses from comprehensive institutions and all institutions in our study.

Figure 25. Reporting Relationship of Individual with Operating Responsibility for Student Assessment Activities



In the majority of comprehensive institutions (71%), the individual with operational responsibility for student assessment reports to the chief academic officer. In a much smaller proportion of institutions, this individual reports to the chief executive officer (19%). Compared to all institutions in our study, comprehensive institutions more often mention reporting to the chief academic officer and less often mention reporting to the chief executive officer. Other offices considered in this question were almost never cited by comprehensive institutions and all institutions alike.

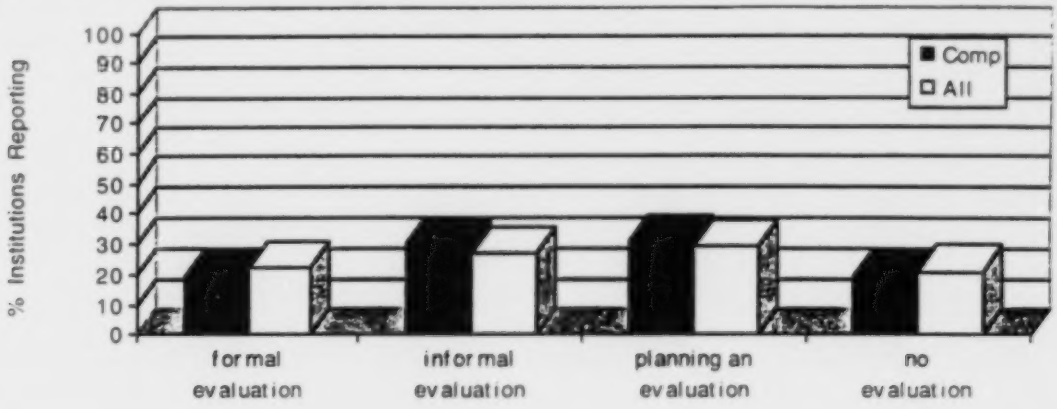
Evaluating the Student Assessment Process

The student assessment literature insists upon the importance of institutions regularly evaluating their assessment processes. Consequently, our survey inquired whether institutions had evaluated their student assessment plan or process and if so, what elements of their plan or process had been reviewed.

Status of Evaluation of Student Assessment Plan or Process

Institutions were asked whether they have conducted a formal evaluation, an informal evaluation, are currently developing plans for an evaluation, or are not planning to evaluate their assessment process. The results for comprehensive institutions and all institutions are depicted in Figure 26.

Figure 26. Status of Student Assessment Evaluation



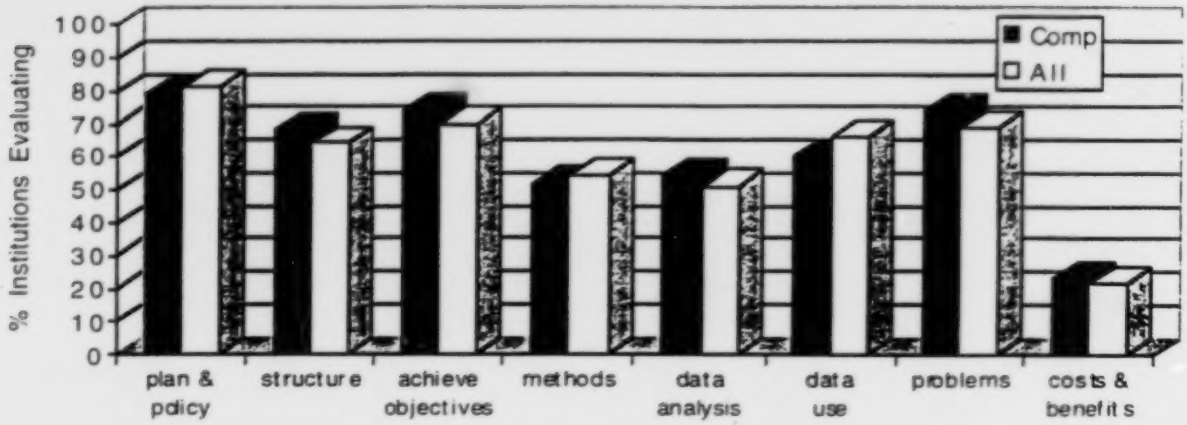
Only half of comprehensive institutions have evaluated their student assessment process, more often informally (30%) than formally (19%). About one-third are developing evaluation plans (31%). Comparatively few (19%) are neither evaluating nor planning to evaluate their assessment process. There are few differences in the status of evaluation among comprehensive institutions and all institutions in our study. The relatively low incidence of actual evaluation and high incidence of evaluation planning is reflective of the newness of assessment activities among postsecondary institutions.

Elements of Student Assessment Evaluation

Those institutions that had formally or informally evaluated their student assessment process were asked which of eight elements were reviewed as part of the evaluation: student assessment plans and policies; structure and responsibility for student assessment; achievement of intended objectives for student assessment; reliability and validity of assessment instruments and methods; quality of data analysis; use of assessment information in institutional decision-making; problems encountered while conducting assessment; and the costs and benefits of student assessment. Results of this question for comprehensive institutions and all institutions are presented in Figure 27.

When evaluating their student assessment process, comprehensive institutions most often focus on administrative or managerial elements such as the assessment plan itself (79%), achievement of intended objectives (74%), problems encountered while conducting assessment (74%), and structure and responsibility for assessment (68%). There is somewhat less examination of the use of assessment information in institutional decision making (60%) or of the technical aspects of assessment such as instrument reliability and validity (52%) and data analysis quality (54%). Institutions are least likely to evaluate the comparative costs and benefits of student assessment (23%). Comprehensive institutions differ little from all institutions in their evaluation approaches.

Figure 27. Elements of Student Assessment Evaluation



Summary Observations

The preceding sections have examined various aspects of comprehensive institutions' organizational and administrative support for student assessment. The overall pattern reveals a student assessment support strategy that is more internally than externally focused in its orientation, and a leadership and governance approach that is quite decentralized in nature. Evaluation efforts appear to be still emerging.

The mission statements of comprehensive colleges and universities prioritize undergraduate education although few make explicit mention of assessing student performance. In terms of the overall purpose or function of their student assessment efforts, survey responses from comprehensive institutions suggest they are more often intended to address internal than external needs. With the exception of preparing for an institutional accreditation self-study, comprehensive institutions identify internal improvements — in student achievement, academic programs, and to a lesser extent, faculty instruction — as more important purposes for engaging in student assessment than purposes related to external or internal accountability.

Considering their use of administrative and governance activities, comprehensive institutions rely more on professional development opportunities and governance structures that engage internal constituents in decision making as means of promoting assessment than on administrative incentives or rewards. Internal leadership support for student assessment is generally thought to be high; senior administrators are viewed as the internal constituency most supportive of student assessment, followed by faculty and trustees.

Overall, comprehensive institutions have adopted a decentralized approach to assessment plans and policies. This is reflected both in the form of institutional policy for student assessment that typically exists and in their patterns of participation in assessment planning. Planning and coordinating responsibility for student assessment is chiefly situated in academic affairs rather than in chief executive, institutional research or student affairs offices. Faculty are well represented in all aspects of the student assessment planning process — from sitting on an institution-wide planning group, to holding executive responsibility for this group, to approving changes in the assessment plan or policy. Oversight of day-to-day student assessment activities is most often assigned to institutional research personnel and faculty members, with academic affairs personnel

also frequently given this responsibility. The individual with operational responsibility most often reports to the chief academic officer.

Evaluation of the student assessment plan and process is not yet a well-developed practice among comprehensive institutions. Fully half of comprehensive institutions have not yet evaluated their assessment process although many are planning to do so. However, most elements of a good evaluation are considered by comprehensive institutions that have either formally or informally evaluated their student assessment process.

Compared to all institutions, comprehensive institutions are more likely to have a formal decentralized institutional policy for student assessment — requiring some form of student assessment activity of all academic units but permitting units to develop their own assessment plans and activities. Student assessment is more often positioned as an academic affairs responsibility than as a student affairs or administrative function. Comprehensive institutions are more likely to involve faculty and less likely to involve student affairs personnel in student assessment planning and managing or overseeing day-to-day assessment activities. The chief academic officer is more often designated and chief executive officer is less often designated as the reporting line for changes to the assessment plan or day-to-day assessment operations.

6. ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Reports on the existence of specific institutional practices and policies designed to promote student assessment management. Comprehensive institutions prefer unobtrusive practices and policies, such as distributing assessment results and providing access to student performance information, to more obtrusive practices and policies such as using student assessment information in making either budget allocation or faculty evaluation and reward decisions.

A fourth domain in our conceptual framework is that of assessment management practices and policies that provide mechanisms for managing the student assessment process and direct the ways in which student assessment information is used throughout the institution. Assessment management practices and policies are suggested in the literature as powerful means through which institutions can support student assessment and encourage the use of collected assessment information. Conceptual dimensions of assessment management practices and policies such as their comprehensiveness, consistency, and the extent to which they are employed within an institution are expected to influence internal support for student assessment and the likelihood of achieving institutional impacts from assessment information.

Our survey asked about specific institutional practices and policies promoting student assessment management. These items were factor analyzed to create nine comprehensive indices. In this chapter we will present results of these assessment management practice and policy indices, rather than of individual items.

Practices for Managing Student Assessment

What kinds of practices do institutions develop to manage and promote their student assessment process? We asked respondents about the existence of a variety of specific institutional practices used to manage the student assessment process in four areas: academic resource allocation, student information systems, internal access to student assessment information, and distribution of assessment reports and studies. Scores for institutions for all specific practices in these four sections are presented in Appendix A. We used factor analysis to reduce these responses to indices of management practices in these four areas. Detailed information on these indices is provided in Appendix B. Briefly, the four indices are:

1. Academic Budget Decisions: whether the institution's academic budget process compares academic units on student performance indicators and allocates resources competitively among them; or rewards them for improvement based on student performance indicators.

2. Computer Support: whether the institution has a computerized student information system which includes student performance indicators, tracks students from application through graduation; and is integrated with faculty, curricular and financial databases.

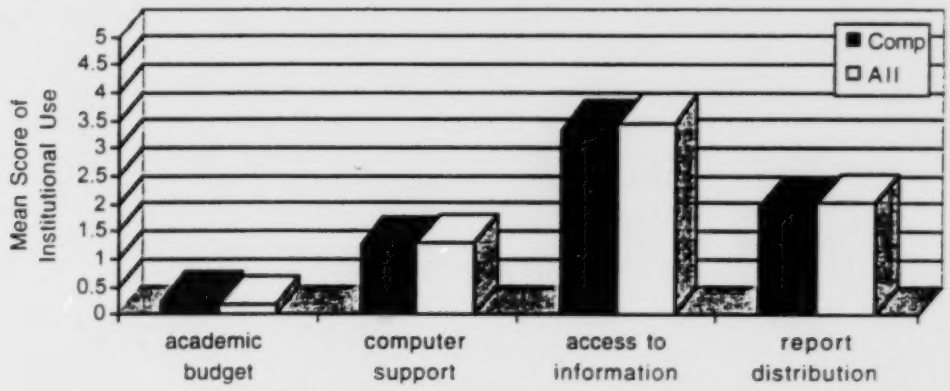
3. Access to Student Assessment Information: whether assessment information for individual students is available to institutional research, assessment or evaluation professionals; senior academic administrators; department chairs or academic program administrators; student affairs professionals; and faculty advisors.

4. Distribution of Assessment Reports: whether assessment reports are regularly distributed to students, faculty, academic administrators, student affairs professionals, employers, and the general public.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 28 presents mean scores for these four indices. Each was originally measured on a different scale. For the purposes of comparison, we have translated each index to a scale of zero to five. Therefore, we can determine which of these practices is more prevalent in comprehensive institutions and all institutions in our study. Scores for specific items comprising each index are taken from Appendix A.

Figure 28. Extent of Institutional Use of Assessment Management Practices



Scale: 0 = institution uses no practices in index; 5 = institution uses all practices in index.

Of these four indices of assessment management practices, comprehensive institutions are most likely to provide access to assessment information to a number of internal constituents (mean index score of 3.34). For example, one of the items comprising this index is whether this information is accessible to institutional researchers: 77% of comprehensive institutions in our study report that it is. High proportions of comprehensive institutions (63% to 76%) report that student assessment information is available to a variety of academic personnel. There is one exception to this pattern of internal access: only half (49%) of comprehensive institutions grant such information access to student affairs professionals, a proportion that is lower than that reported by all institutions in our study.

The next most prevalent student assessment management practice is distributing student assessment reports to six internal and external constituents (mean index score of 1.95). Comprehensive institutions are most likely to regularly distribute assessment reports to academic administrators (87%), faculty (68%) and, to a lesser extent, student affairs professionals (52%). Very few regularly distribute such reports to students (17%), employers (4%) or the general public (7%). Compared to all institutions, comprehensive institutions are less likely to distribute assessment reports to student affairs personnel; there are no large differences in other report distribution practices.

Comparatively speaking, comprehensive institutions have limited information system capabilities for student assessment (mean index score of 1.25). One of the items in this index is whether the institution has a student information system that tracks students from application through to graduation: less than half (43%) of comprehensive institutions in our study have such a system. Fewer (24%) have a computerized information system which includes student performance indicators and fewer still (8%) have a student assessment information system that is integrated with other institutional databases. Comprehensive institutions do not report much different information system capabilities than all institutions in our study.

Using student assessment information in the budget process to compare and reward academic units is almost a non-existent practice (mean index score of .25). Very few comprehensive institutions use student performance indicators as the basis for competitively allocating resources among academic units (2%) or rewarding academic units for performance improvement (5%). Comprehensive institutions do not differ appreciably from all institutions in their use of these resource allocation practices.

Policies Supporting and Promoting the Use of Student Assessment

While the previous section focused on practices used to manage student assessment, this section focuses on the policies used to both support student assessment and guide how the resulting data are incorporated into other institutional processes. We asked survey respondents about the extent to which they have developed a variety of specific institutional policies to support and promote student assessment in five areas: student involvement in assessment; professional development for faculty and academic affairs administrators; training for student affairs personnel; faculty evaluation and rewards; and academic planning and review processes. Scores for institutions for all specific policies are presented in Appendix A. Factor analysis produced five indices of student assessment policies. Detailed information on these indices is provided in Appendix B. Briefly, these five indices are:

1. Student Involvement: extent to which the institution requires students to participate in student assessment activities, provides students with information on the purpose and uses of student assessment, and provides individual feedback regarding student performance results.

2. Professional Development: extent to which the institution provides funds for faculty to attend assessment conferences, faculty workshops or consultative services on student assessment, assistance to faculty to improve their use of student assessment, and workshops/seminars for academic administrators on assessment.

3. Student Affairs Training: extent to which the institution requires student affairs staff to receive training on assessment and provides student assessment workshops for student affairs administrators.

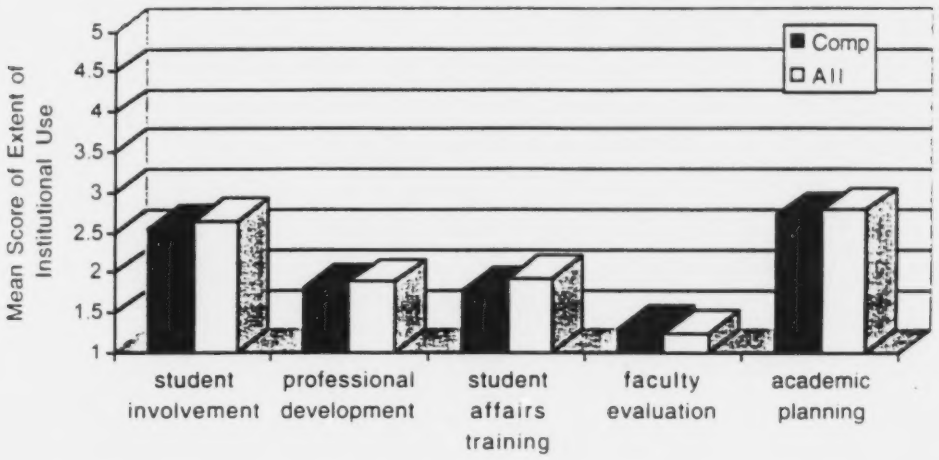
4. Faculty Evaluation: extent to which the institution considers evidence of student performance in faculty evaluation for promotion; incorporates evidence of student performance into faculty evaluation for salary and merit; considers faculty scholarship on assessment in promotion, tenure or salary reviews; considers faculty participation in assessment in promotion, tenure or salary reviews; and recognizes faculty for effective use of assessment.

5. Academic Planning and Review: extent to which the institution incorporates student performance data into academic department or undergraduate program planning or review; general education or core curriculum review; course-level review and development; and review and planning for student academic support services.

These indices summarize the extent to which these policies exist at institutions based on a five point scale: 1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments. Figure 29 presents the mean scores for these five indices for comprehensive institutions and all institutions in our study. Mean scores for individual policies comprising each index are taken from Appendix A.

Of the five indices of student assessment policies presented in Figure 29, comprehensive institutions are most likely to incorporate student assessment data into academic planning and review processes (mean index score of 2.72). They make fairly extensive use of student assessment data in planning and review processes for academic departments or undergraduate

Figure 29. Extent of Institutional Use of Assessment Management Policies



1=not done at all; 2=done in a few depts; 3=done in some depts; 4=done in many depts; 5=done in most depts.

programs (mean item score of 3.78), general education or core curriculum (mean item score of 3.42), and courses (mean item score of 3.24) — doing so in some to many departments. They are slightly less likely to use this information in processes for reviewing and planning student academic support services (mean item score of 2.92).

Comprehensive institutions also make fairly extensive use of policies encouraging student involvement in assessment activities (mean index score of 2.56). Institutional scores for specific policies comprising this index reveal that, on average, some to many departments require students to participate in assessment activities (mean item score of 3.66) and provide students with information regarding the purposes and uses of student assessment (mean item score of 3.42). Some departments provide students with individual feedback regarding their assessment results (mean item score of 2.97) but only a few departments provide incentives as a means of encouraging student involvement in assessment activities (mean item score of 1.91).

Comprehensive institutions are less likely to offer professional development on student assessment to their faculty and academic administrators (mean index score of 1.81). Some departments provide funds for faculty to attend assessment conferences (mean item score of 2.85), and offer workshops or seminars on using student assessment information to their faculty (mean item score of 2.83) and academic administrators (mean item score of 2.50). They are less likely to encourage faculty use of assessment information by providing assistance such as paid leaves or course reduction (mean item score of 1.96). They also make limited provision of professional development on student assessment for student affairs staff or administrators (mean item score of 1.78). Compared to all institutions, comprehensive institutions make slightly less extensive use of professional development policies to support their student assessment efforts.

Many departments within comprehensive institutions report that they encourage their faculty to assess student learning in classes (mean item score of 3.81). However, respondents report that a few departments or less at their institution consider evidence of student performance in decisions concerning faculty evaluation for promotion (mean item score of 1.94) or annual salary and merit increases (mean item score of 1.60). They are slightly more likely to consider faculty scholarship on assessment (mean item score of 2.27) and participation in assessment (mean item score of 2.04) in evaluation decisions. A few departments publicly recognize faculty members who

have made effective use of student assessment (mean item score of 1.58). But on the whole, like all institutions in our survey, comprehensive institutions do not link faculty evaluation and reward policies to student assessment (mean index score of 1.31).

Summary Observations

In the previous section we concluded that patterns of organizational and administrative support for student assessment are decentralized within comprehensive institutions, more often directed toward addressing internal than external purposes, and that responsibility and coordination for student assessment is typically positioned within academic affairs. Findings regarding the use of assessment management practices and policies are consistent with these patterns.

Comprehensive institutions permit a variety of academic personnel access to assessment information on individual students. Conceivably, providing this information access should assist faculty and academic administrators in helping students through advising or intervening as appropriate. Such access is less often extended to student affairs personnel. Assessment information distribution is most often intended for internal rather than external purposes, and more often for academic administrators than for other internal constituencies. While a sizable proportion of comprehensive institutions have the benefit of computer technology for managing their student information, comparatively fewer have merged assessment data within their information systems. This may constrain the ability of comprehensive institutions to systematically analyze student assessment data and to examine how student performance is related to aspects of students' educational experiences. There is very little use of student assessment information in determining resource allocations among academic units.

Comprehensive institutions make fairly extensive use of student assessment information in academic planning and review processes but less often incorporate this information in planning for academic support services. Some departments have policies intended to encourage student involvement in assessment activities. While many departments report that they encourage their faculty members to assess student learning in their classes, few provide professional development support for student assessment and even fewer include assessment-related criteria within their faculty evaluation and reward policies.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

7. USES AND IMPACTS OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Explores two important questions regarding how institutions use student assessment information in decision-making and the impact it has on institutions. Comprehensive institutions are not using student assessment information to any great degree in making academic decisions and report that student assessment has had little impact on either their internal processes or their external relationships.

As noted in our introduction, effective student assessment processes contribute to improvements in institutional and student performance. Consequently, two important questions in our research are: 1) how have institutions used student assessment information and 2) what impact has student assessment information had on institutions?

From the literature we identified and focused on two critical dimensions: the use of student assessment information in academic decision making, and the internal and external impacts on the institution that have resulted from student assessment. Our survey included ten academic decisions and fourteen institutional impacts. Survey respondents used a four-point scale to indicate the extent to which student assessment information had influenced these academic decisions in the institution (1 = no action or influence unknown; 2 = action taken, data not influential; 3 = action taken, data somewhat influential; and 4 = action taken, data very influential). Survey respondents also used a four-point scale to indicate the impact that student assessment information has had on the internal and external items indicating institutional performance (1 = not monitored, do not know; 2 = monitored, negative impact; 3 = monitored, no known impact; 4 = monitored, positive impact). Institutions' scores for each use and impact item are presented in Appendix A. Details of the indices are presented in Appendix B. Factor analysis clustered these individual items into five indices of assessment management policies, two reflecting assessment information uses in academic decisions and three reflecting impacts of student assessment on the institution. Briefly, the five indices are:

1. Educational Decisions: the extent to which student assessment information has been used to revise undergraduate academic mission or goals; design or reorganize academic programs or majors; design or reorganize student affairs units; allocate resources to academic units; modify student assessment plans, policies, or processes; modify general education curriculum; modify student out-of-class learning experiences; create or modify distance learning initiatives; modify teaching methods; and modify student academic support services.

2. Faculty Decisions: the extent to which student assessment information has been used to decide faculty promotion and tenure; and faculty salary increases or rewards.

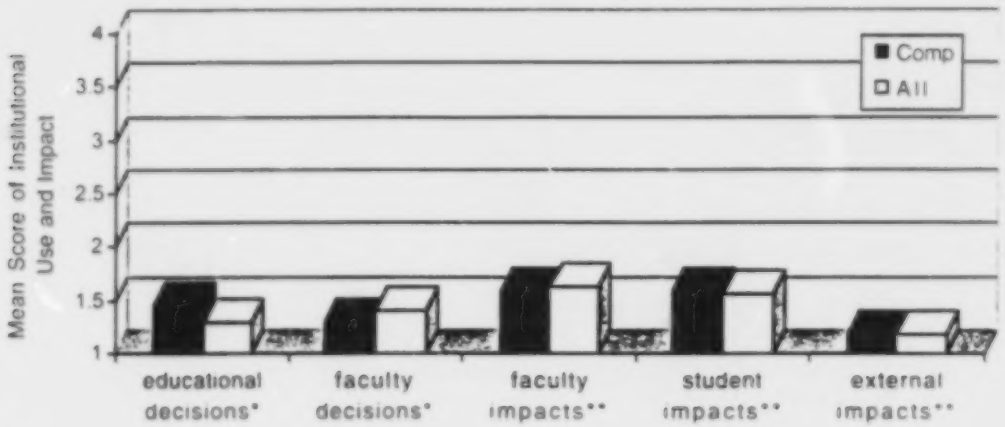
3. Faculty Impacts: whether student assessment information has stimulated campus discussions of undergraduate education; contributed to faculty satisfaction, contributed to faculty interest in teaching; and led to changes in teaching methods used.

4. Student Impacts: whether student assessment information has contributed to student satisfaction; affected student retention or graduation rates; affected student grade performance; and affected student achievement on external examinations.

5. External Impacts: whether student assessment information has affected student application or acceptance rates; allocation of state funding; evaluation from regional accreditation agency; private fund-raising results; success on grant applications; communications with external constituents; and institutional reputation or image.

Figure 30 presents the means for these five indices for comprehensive institutions and all institutions. Mean scores for individual item comprising each index are taken from Appendix A.

Figure 30. Institutional Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment Information



*Use scale: 1=no action or influence unknown, 2=action taken, data not influential; 3=action taken, data somewhat influential; 4=action taken, data very influential.

**Impact scale: 1=not monitored, do not know; 2=monitored, negative impact; 3=monitored, no known impact; 4=monitored, positive impact.

Uses in Academic Decisions

As Figure 30 shows, student assessment information has had limited influence on educational decisions (mean index score of 1.44) within comprehensive institutions and even less on faculty-related decisions (mean index score of 1.30). A comparison of institutions' mean scores for specific items comprising each of these indices provides more detail about the uses made of assessment information. A description of these indices and their associated items is available in Appendix B. Mean scores for items are presented in Appendix A.

Concerning individual items within the educational decisions index, comprehensive institutions have most often used student assessment information to design or reorganize academic programs or majors (mean item score of 2.67) and to modify student assessment plans or processes (mean item score of 2.60), student academic support services (mean item score of 2.56) and general education curriculum (mean item score of 2.55). These mean scores indicate assessment information has been somewhat influential in these decisions. They are least likely to have used assessment information to create or modify distance learning initiatives (mean item score of 1.70) and to allocate resources to academic units (mean item score of 1.79).

In contrast, more than two-thirds of respondents from comprehensive institutions are unaware of the influence of assessment information on decisions concerning faculty promotion and tenure (67%), and faculty salary increases or rewards (70%), the individual items comprising the faculty decisions index. For the most part, comprehensive institutions report that they are not at all likely to use student assessment information in making decisions on either faculty promotion and tenure (mean item score of 1.45) or faculty salary increases or rewards (mean item score of 1.45).

Compared to all institutions in our study, comprehensive institutions make greater use of assessment information in educational decisions and less use in faculty decisions. But overall, assessment information appears to have limited influence on institutional decision making.

Institutional Impacts

In terms of student assessment impacts on the institution, comprehensive institutions are slightly more likely to report student assessment information has affected indicators of faculty (mean index score of 1.58) and student (mean index score of 1.58) performance than external indicators of institutional performance (mean index score of 1.18). Again, a comparison of institutions' mean scores for specific items comprising these three indices provides more detail about the impact of student assessment information. A description of these indices and their associated items is available in Appendix B. Mean scores for items are presented in Appendix A.

Within the faculty impacts index, comprehensive institutions are most likely to attribute changes in faculty teaching methods (mean item score of 2.46) and more frequent discussions of undergraduate education (mean item score of 2.41) to student assessment information. They have more often documented positive impacts from assessment information on student retention or graduation rates (mean item score of 2.15) and satisfaction (mean item score of 2.04) than on student grades (mean item score of 1.80) or performance on external examinations (mean item score of 1.94).

Institutions are least likely to report that student assessment has had an impact on external measures of institutional performance. With one exception, mean scores of individual items comprising this index indicate that most comprehensive institutions have not monitored external impacts of their student assessment efforts (mean scores range from 1.43 to 1.99). The exception to this pattern concerns regional accreditation evaluations: institutions are more likely to report a positive impact from student assessment information on this indicator (mean item score of 2.66) than any other individual measure of external performance considered in the survey.

Overall, as the mean scores presented in Figure 30 clearly show, most institutions participating in our study, comprehensive institutions and all institutions alike, have not monitored the impact of student assessment on internal and external indicators of institutional performance. Comprehensive institutions do not differ appreciably from all institutions in our study in their reports of student assessment impacts.

Summary Observations

To date, comprehensive institutions have made limited use of student assessment information for institutional decisions. Many respondents are unaware of whether assessment information has been influential or not in shaping institutional decisions. When used, assessment information is more likely to inform educational decisions, particularly concerning academic and assessment planning, than decisions regarding faculty evaluation and rewards.

Similarly, very few institutions have monitored the impact of student assessment information on faculty and student performance and even fewer have done so for external indicators of institutional performance. When monitoring has been undertaken, comprehensive institutions most often report assessment information has stimulated discussions of undergraduate education and led to changes in teaching methods used. These findings indicate that student assessment has not yet become entrenched in comprehensive institutions.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

8. KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Institutional factors, such as conducting assessment for internal improvement purposes and providing a number of administrative and governance activities to promote student assessment, have more influence on the type and extent of student assessment data collected by comprehensive institutions than do state or regional accreditation factors. Institutions are more likely to report using student assessment information in academic decisions if they make extensive use of a variety of assessment management practices and policies to promote their assessment efforts, conduct studies of collected assessment data and use institution-wide support strategies. External forces are comparatively weaker influences on the use of assessment information. Similarly, institutional choices and activities are stronger determinants of achieving positive impacts from assessment information than external influences. Specifically, comprehensive institutions that collect and analyze extensive assessment data, have centralized policies requiring assessment activities, and use assessment management practices and policies to support assessment efforts report that student assessment has had a greater impact on faculty and student performance and external relationships.

In the previous sections we have examined external influences, institutional approaches, organizational and administrative support, management practices and policies, and institutional uses and impacts related to student assessment. But even more important is understanding how these domains influence the likelihood that student assessment will make a difference in institutional performance. That is, *which* external influences, institutional approaches to assessment, organizational and administrative support patterns, and assessment management practices and policies are most likely to promote the use and positive impacts of student assessment information?

In this section, we examine three key relationships. First, we discuss how external influences — the state and regional accrediting agencies — influence an institution's approach to student assessment. Then we examine how external influences and institutional characteristics, approaches, support patterns, and management practices and polices affect an institution's use of student assessment data. Finally, we examine how these domains lead to positive institutional impacts from student assessment. The analyses in this section use the indices discussed in previous sections. For detailed information on the indices, please refer to Appendix B.

External and Internal Influences on Student Assessment Approaches

Are external forces more influential than internal forces in determining how a comprehensive institutions approach student assessment? We used three multiple regression models to compare the influences of state characteristics related to student assessment, regional accreditation membership, and institution-wide support patterns for student assessment on the extent of an institution's use of three approaches to student assessment: cognitive assessment (the extent to which data are collected on measures of students' cognitive performance); affective assessment (the extent to which data are collected on measures of students' affective development or performance); and post-college assessment (the extent to which data are collected on measures of students' post-enrollment performance). In these three models, the predictor variables stem from three domains: state assessment approach, accrediting region, and institution-wide support. The predictor variables are shown in Table 6 and defined in detail in Appendix B. These analysis were restricted to public comprehensive institutions.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Predictors of Cognitive Assessment

Which of the variables has the most influence on whether a comprehensive institution will assess students' cognitive abilities? The first two columns of Table 6 show how institutional, state and regional accrediting influences are related to the extent to which these institutions collect data on students' cognitive performance. This model predicted a moderate proportion of the variance in institutions' collection of cognitive data, accounting for 25% of the variance.

Table 6. The Influence of Institution-Wide Support, State Assessment Approach, and Accrediting Region on the Extent of Institutional Approach to Student Assessment for Public Comprehensive Institutions

	Extent of Institutional Approach					
	Cognitive Assessment		Affective Assessment		Post-College Assessment	
	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2
R^2	.25**		.07**		.06**	
Institution-Wide Support						
Mission emphasis						
Administrative & governance activities	.15*	.02				
Administrator & faculty support	.15*	.02	.15	.02		
Conduct for internal improvement	.21**	.11			.17*	.03
Conduct for state						
Conduct for accreditation						
State Assessment Approach						
Authority structure						
Form of state assessment initiative						
Common indicators/outcomes						
Accrediting Region						
Middle States	-.29**	.05				
North Central						
New England	-.16*	.02				
Northwest***						
Southern			.22**	.05		
Western	-.20**	.03			-.16*	.03

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

***Since "accrediting region" was a categorical variable, Northwestern accrediting region was left out of this regression because its effect on cognitive competencies, based on ANOVA, was closest to the mean.

Institution-wide patterns of support are the strongest and a positive source of influence. In particular, institutions that view internal institutional improvement as an important purpose for conducting student assessment are likely to collect the most extensive cognitive data. The number of administrative and governance activities sponsored by the institution to promote student assessment and the degree of administrator and faculty support for student assessment are also important predictors of cognitive assessment.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Regional accrediting membership is also related to institutions' cognitive data collection efforts but the significant influences from this domain are negative. That is, institutions in the Middle States, Western and New England regional accrediting regions are less likely to assess students' cognitive abilities than institutions belonging to the other accrediting regions. This may reflect variations in the length of time different accrediting regions have included student assessment criteria within their reporting requirements for institutions as well as differences in the specific emphases of those criteria. No state variables emerged as significant predictors of cognitive assessment.

Predictors of Affective Assessment

The middle two columns of Table 6 show the relationship of variables in the institutional, state and regional accrediting domains to the extent to which comprehensive institutions collect data on students' affective development. The variables in this model do not work well as predictors of affective assessment:
the total model explains only 7% of the difference in affective assessment efforts among comprehensive institutions. Only two variables are statistically significant predictors in this model. Comprehensive institutions that belong to the Southern accrediting region are likely to collect more extensive affective data than those that belong to other accrediting regions. The degree of administrator and faculty support for student assessment is also positively related to collecting affective data. No state variables serve as significant influences on affective assessment.

The poor ability of this model to predict institutions' affective assessment efforts is largely attributable to our earlier finding that very few comprehensive institutions collect this type of data. There is simply not much assessment behavior here to predict! This finding also suggests that variables not included in this model may account for institutions' decisions to collect affective data from their students.

Predictors of Post-College Assessment

The final two columns of Table 6 show the relationship of variables in the institutional, state and regional accrediting domains with the extent to which comprehensive institutions collect data from former students (post-college assessment). Only 6% of the variation in this type of data collection is accounted for by this model. Again, only two variables operate as significant influences. Conducting assessment for internal improvement is predictive of the extent to which comprehensive institutions collect post-college data. Institutions in the Western accrediting region are less likely to collect assessment data from formerly-enrolled students.

As was the case with affective data, this model does not work well at predicting institutions' data collection for former students. This suggests that other variables not included in this model are more important influences on this dimension of student assessment approach.

Institution-wide support strategies and accreditation region membership are the primary influences in all three of these student assessment approach models. Apparently, the drive for state-level accountability has not exceeded the influence of institutional accreditation, and internal strategies are the driving force of all three approaches to student assessment.

Influences on Using Assessment Information in Academic Decisions

How do comprehensive institutions effectively promote and support the use of student assessment information in academic decision making? Within the domain of academic decision making, we created two indices reflecting the use of student assessment information: educational decision making and faculty decision making (these indices are described in detail in Appendix B and section seven). We used multiple regression to examine the influence of external forces,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

institutional size, institutional approach to student assessment, institution-wide support, and assessment management practices and policies on using student assessment information in educational and faculty decisions. The predictor variables in this model are defined in detail in Appendix B. Table 7 presents the results of these two regression models for comprehensive institutions.

Influences on the Use of Assessment Information in Educational Decisions

The educational decisions model works very well for comprehensive institutions, explaining almost half (49%) of the variance in the influence of student assessment data on educational decisions. Significant predictor variables come from three institutional domains: approach to assessment, institution-wide support, and assessment management practices and policies.

Of these, the domain of assessment management practices and policies contributes the strongest and most influences. In particular, the extent to which comprehensive institutions have policies encouraging student involvement is strongly related to using assessment data in educational decisions (accounts for 18% of variance) followed by the existence of policies involving student affairs staff in professional development for student assessment (accounts for 5% of variance). While comprehensive institutions report quite extensive use of student involvement policies, most make comparatively little use of policies for their student affairs personnel. Including assessment-related criteria in faculty evaluation and reward processes is also positively related to using assessment data in educational decisions (accounts for 2% of variance). This policy and the use of assessment information in educational decisions are both related to a strong internal commitment to student assessment. Three other assessment practices and policies are also positively related to educational decision uses although each contributes little on its own: the breadth of internal access to assessment information, distribution of assessment summary reports, and providing professional development on student assessment for faculty and academic administrators.

One variable from the assessment approach domain functions as a very strong predictor. The number of studies conducted of the relationship of student performance and institutional experiences is positively related to using assessment data to make educational decisions (accounts for 11% of variance). This is a logical relationship; conducting such studies should provide institutions with relevant data to consider in decisions concerning academic planning, instructional practices and academic support services — all decisions reflected within the educational decisions index. Two other variables are also significantly related to educational decision uses although each contributes little to the variance in this assessment use. Collecting cognitive data from students is a positive predictor of educational decision uses while the number of instruments used to collect assessment data is a negative predictor of using assessment information to make educational decisions. Instruments and inventories generally consist of questions that are relevant to students enrolled in a variety of institutions. Information collected from these instruments, while useful for measuring student performance, may not provide much specific information for administrative decision making at individual institutions.

Finally, three institution-wide support variables are predictive of using assessment information in educational decisions: conducting student assessment for internal improvement purposes (explains 5% of variance), evaluating the student assessment process (explains 3% of variance), and emphasizing undergraduate education and student assessment in the academic mission (explains 2% of variance). These three variables are indicative of a strong institutional commitment to student assessment.

No external influence variables are significant predictors of educational decisions, suggesting that this use of assessment information is primarily determined by internal influences.

Table 7. The Influence of External Influences, Institutional Context, Institutional Approach, Institution-Wide Support, and Management Practices and Policies on Using Student Assessment Information in Educational and Faculty Decisions for Comprehensive Institutions

	Educational Decisions Beta	ΔR^2	Faculty Decisions Beta	ΔR^2
Adjusted R^2	.49**		.20**	
External Influences				
Middle States accrediting region				
North Central accrediting region				
New England accrediting region				
Southern accrediting region			.13*	.01
Western accrediting region				
State initiative for student assessment				
State approach to student assessment			.17**	.02
Accrediting influence			.12*	.01
Institutional Context				
Control (1 = public, 2 = private)			-.13*	.02
Enrollment				
Institutional Approach to Student Assessment				
Cognitive assessment	.11*	.01		
Affective assessment				
Post-college assessment				
Number of instruments	-.13*	.01		
Student-centered methods				
External methods				
Total assessment studies	.21**	.11		
Institution-Wide Support for Student Assessment				
Mission emphasis	.12**	.02		
Conduct for internal improvement	.21**	.05		
Conduct for state				
Conduct for accreditation				
Administrative & governance activities				
Administrator & faculty support				
Formal centralized policy			.14*	.01
Institution-wide planning group				
Conducted evaluation of assessment process	.19**	.03		
Assessment Management Policies and Practices				
Academic budget decisions			.18**	.04
Computer support				
Access to information	.09*	.01		
Distribution of reports	.09*	.01		
Student involvement	.11*	.18		
Professional development	.10*	.01	.16**	.02
Student affairs training	.15**	.05		
Faculty evaluation[1]	.09*	.02	n/inc	
Academic planning and review[2]	n/inc		.19**	.04

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

[1]The factor "faculty evaluation" was not entered into the regression model predicting use of student assessment information in faculty decisions as many of the items comprising these two factors were similar.

[2]The factor "academic planning and review" was not entered into the regression model predicting use of student assessment information in educational decisions as many of the items comprising these two factors were similar.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Nor were there significant differences in the likelihood of using assessment data for educational decisions by institutional control or size.

Influences on the Use of Assessment Information in Faculty Decisions

The variables used in this regression model have less influence on comprehensive institutions' use of assessment data for making faculty-related decisions. In total, they account for only 20% of the variance in this assessment use. This result is not surprising, given that most comprehensive institutions do not use student assessment information to make faculty decisions.

As we observed in the model for educational decisions, assessment management practices and policies are the strongest predictors of comprehensive institutions using assessment data to make faculty-related decisions. Institutions that incorporate assessment data in their academic planning and review processes (explains 4% of variance) and that use assessment data as a basis for making resource allocations to academic units (explains 4% of variance) are more likely to use assessment data in decisions about faculty tenure, promotion, salary increases and other rewards. This suggests a general pattern of integrating assessment data with institutional decision making. Providing professional development on student assessment for faculty and academic administrators is also a positive predictor of using assessment data in faculty decisions (explains 2% of variance).

External influences play a role in this use of assessment data although the influence is weaker than that from assessment management practices and policies. Institutions that report having state-mandated student performance indicators and outcomes are more likely to use assessment data for faculty decisions (explains 2% of variance). Institutions that view regional accreditation requirements as an important influence on their assessment activities and that belong to the Southern accrediting region also make greater use of assessment data in faculty decisions.

Finally, it appears that private comprehensive institutions are less likely than public to use student assessment data to make faculty-related decisions.

Influences of Student Assessment Information on Internal and External Institutional Performance

How does the use of student assessment information affect various internal and external institutional performance dimensions? In our survey, comprehensive institutions reported whether, and the extent to which, student assessment has affected various aspects of faculty and student performance and relationships with their external environment (these indices are described in Appendix B and section seven). Using factor analysis, we created two indices of internal impacts from assessment: faculty impacts and student impacts. All of the items in the external impact section of the survey factored into one "external impact" index. We used multiple regression to examine the relationship of external forces, institutional approach to student assessment, institution-wide support patterns, and assessment management practices and policies to institutional impacts of student assessment information. We ran separate regression models for each of the three impacts. The predictor variables in these models are defined in detail in Appendix B. Table 8 presents the results of the three regression models for comprehensive institutions.

Predictors of Faculty Impacts

What variables predict whether a comprehensive institution's student assessment efforts will have an impact on its faculty members' attitudes and activities? The first two columns of Table 8 show statistically significant predictors of faculty impacts. According to the results of our regression model, the domains of institutional approach to student assessment, institution-wide support strategies for student assessment, and assessment management practices and policies are

Table 8. The Influence of External Influences, Institutional Context, Institutional Approach, Institution-Wide Support, and Management Practices and Policies on Faculty, Student, and External Impacts for Comprehensive Institutions

	Faculty Impacts		Student Impacts		External Impacts	
	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2
Adjusted R^2	.25**		.22**		.23**	
External Influences						
Middle States accrediting region						
North Central accrediting region						
New England accrediting region						
Southern accrediting region			.16**	.02		
Western accrediting region						
State initiative for student assessment						
State approach to student assessment						
Accrediting influence						
Institutional Context						
Control (1 = public, 2 = private)						
Enrollment					.13*	.02
Institutional Approach to Student Assessment						
Cognitive assessment						
Affective assessment						
Post-college assessment					.12*	.01
Number of instruments					.13*	.03
Student-centered methods						
External methods						
Total assessment studies	.24**	.12	.27**	.13		
Institution-Wide Support for Student Assessment						
Mission emphasis						
Conduct for internal improvement					.11*	.02
Conduct for state					.16**	.04
Conduct for accreditation						
Administrative & governance activities						
Administrator & faculty support						
Formal centralized policy	.14**	.06	.13*	.02		
Institution-wide planning group						
Conducted evaluation of assessment process	.16**	.03				
Assessment Management Policies and Practices						
Budget decisions			.14**	.02		
Computer support						
Access to information						
Distribution of reports	.15**	.03			.20**	.09
Student involvement						
Professional development	.14*	.02				
Student affairs involvement						
Faculty evaluation						
Academic planning and review			.16**	.05		

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

all important influences on faculty impacts from assessment. Together, these predictors explained 25% of the variance in faculty impacts of student assessment.

One dimension of the student assessment approach undertaken plays a key role in achieving faculty impacts. Comprehensive institutions that conduct studies of the relationship between students' performance to their interactions with the institution are likely to report that their assessment activities have impacted faculty (explains 12% of variance). This finding reinforces the view of assessment scholars that institutions must do more than simply collect assessment data if student assessment is to inform changes in institutions' teaching and learning processes. They need to commit efforts to analyze their assessment results in view of students' institutional experiences.

Comprehensive institutions that have a formal centralized policy for student assessment — that is, a formally adopted plan or policy that specifies undergraduate student assessment activities for all academic programs or units — are more likely to report faculty impacts from assessment (accounts for 6% of variance), as are institutions that have either formally or informally evaluated their student assessment process (accounts for 3% of variance). These institution-wide support practices may signal the degree to which institutional leaders support and value undergraduate student assessment.

The assessment management practices and policies used by the institution are also important determinants of whether their assessment activities will affect its faculty. Comprehensive institutions that distribute summary reports to a wide array of internal and external personnel and that offer professional development on student assessment to faculty and academic administrators are more likely to report that their assessment activities have impacted faculty (respectively account for 3% and 2% of variance).

Conversely, external influences from state and regional accrediting bodies and institutional characteristics of size and control are not important predictors of faculty impacts from student assessment.

Predictors of Student Impacts

What variables predict whether a comprehensive institution's student assessment efforts will have an impact on the performance of its students? The middle two columns of Table 8 reveal that institutional choices and activities from the domains of assessment approach, institution-wide support and assessment management practices and policies influence the likelihood of achieving student impacts from assessment. This model explains 22% of the variance in student impacts of student assessment.

Once again, the number of studies conducted of the relationship between students' performance and their institutional experiences is the strongest predictor of a comprehensive institution's assessment efforts leading to improved student performance (accounts for 13% of variance). In the first place, institutions that conduct such studies are likely to be more aware of changes in student performance. Secondly, these institutions are in a more informed position to modify aspects of students' experiences within the institution in ways that will promote student learning and development.

Having an institutional policy that stipulates undergraduate student assessment activities to be carried out within all academic programs or units is also a strong predictor of achieving positive student impacts from assessment (explains 2% of variance). As noted in the discussion of faculty impacts above, this centralized approach to assessment may be indicative of a strong internal commitment to undergraduate student assessment.

Two assessment management practices and policies used by a comprehensive institution also influence whether its student assessment activities will impact student performance. Institutions that use student assessment data in their academic planning and review processes and that use student performance indicators to allocate resources among academic units are likely to report that their assessment activities have contributed to improvements in student performance (account for 5% and 2% of variance respectively). These findings support a positive relationship between using student assessment data for institutional decision making and achieving positive benefits from student assessment.

Only one external variable is significantly related to whether or not comprehensive institutions attribute positive student impacts to their assessment efforts. Institutions that are members of the New England accreditation region are more likely to do so than those that belong to other accrediting regions. Beyond this, external influences and broad institutional characteristics appear to play a minor role in promoting student impacts from assessment.

Predictors of External Impacts

Lastly, what variables predict whether a comprehensive institution's student assessment efforts will have an impact on its relationships with the external environment? The final two columns of Table 8 show the statistically significant predictors of external impacts. Overall, this model explains 23% of the variance in achieving external impacts from student assessment.

The strongest predictor overall comes from the domain of assessment management practices and policies. Comprehensive institutions that distribute summary reports of assessment data to a wide array of constituencies are more likely to report that engaging in student assessment has a positive external impact (accounts for 9% of variance). This breadth of information distribution demonstrates an institution's commitment to informing internal and external personnel about how its student body is performing; positive reports are likely to enhance an institution's external image and reputation.

From the institution-wide support domain, two variables emerge as strong predictors of external impacts from assessment. Comprehensive institutions that consider meeting state reporting requirements to be an important purpose underlying their student assessment efforts are more likely to report positive external impacts, among them, changes in their allocation of state funding (accounts for 4% of variance). Institutions for which internal improvement is an important reason for engaging in student assessment are also more likely to attribute positive external impacts to their student assessment efforts (accounts for 2% of variance). Presumably, these institutions will be able to report improvements in institutional and student performance to their external constituencies.

Within the domain of institutional approach to student assessment, comprehensive institutions that collect data from their former students (accounts for 1% of variance) and those that use a great number of instruments to collect student data (accounts for 3% of variance) are more likely to report positive external impacts from student assessment. The relationship between collecting post-college assessment data and achieving positive external impacts is logical; these institutions will have more data available concerning the performance of their formerly-enrolled students within the external community and so will be in a better position to monitor external impacts. As for the connection between instrument use and external impacts, it may be that data from assessment instruments are more easily quantifiable and thus easier to report to external constituencies than data that are collected through more qualitative assessment methods.

One institutional context variable is significantly predictive of achieving external impacts from assessment. Larger comprehensive institutions report more positive external impacts from student assessment than smaller institutions (accounts for 2% of variance). Institutions supporting

a larger enrollment base may be more likely to use their assessment results as a means of marketing their institution to prospective students and funding sources.

Summary Observations

By comparing how internal and external forces influence the content of comprehensive institutions' student assessment approaches, it is clear that internal influences are much stronger. While different accrediting regions spur varying levels of engagement in collecting student assessment data, state policies and structures do not influence the type and extent of assessment data collected by comprehensive institutions. Two internal strategies are particularly important in determining the extent of student data collected: conducting assessment for internal improvement purposes; and the degree of administrator and faculty support for student assessment.

If comprehensive institutions are to benefit from engaging in student assessment, they should not only be collecting student data but also using these data to make academic decisions. Institutions that use student assessment data for academic planning, instructional development and other educational decisions tend to commit to their assessment process—evidenced by the strategies of engaging in student assessment for internal purposes, building assessment into their academic mission, not only collecting but also conducting relational analyses of their assessment data, and evaluating the assessment process itself. These institutions also make more extensive use of assessment management practices and policies to support assessment efforts; most notably, policies that encourage student involvement in assessment and provide professional development for student affairs personnel. External factors play some role in institutions' use of assessment data for faculty-related decisions, but assessment management practices and policies are even stronger influences. Linking assessment data to budget decisions and to academic planning and review processes is likely to coexist with using assessment data to decide faculty salary, promotion and tenure.

If engaging in student assessment is truly making a difference in comprehensive institutions, they should report that it is having an impact on their internal performance and external relations. Internal choices and efforts are much more important predictors of achieving impacts from assessment information than influences from state and regional accreditation agents. Comprehensive institutions reporting positive faculty and student impacts have gone beyond merely collecting assessment data to analyzing and using the data they collect. They conduct studies of the relationship between student performance and various aspects of their institutional experiences, widely distribute reports of assessment information, and use assessment data for academic planning and internal resource allocations. They demonstrate leadership support for student assessment by enacting centralized policies requiring specified assessment activities of all academic units and evaluating the student assessment process. They offer professional development opportunities to faculty and academic administrators to promote their involvement in student assessment efforts.

External influences do play some role in the likelihood of comprehensive institutions documenting external impacts from assessment. Institutions conducting student assessment to fulfill state reporting requirements are more likely to achieve positive external impacts from their assessment activities. Institutional size is positively related to external impacts. But in the main, it is internal efforts that increase the chances of improving external relationships through student assessment. Widely distributing reports of assessment information, using comprehensive instruments to collect assessment data, collecting data from former students, and viewing internal improvement as an important reason for engaging in student assessment are all strong predictors of reaping positive external benefits from student assessment.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

9. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: RESEARCH RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for comprehensive institutions based on the results of our research are outlined in this section. This study and monograph highlight the importance of viewing student assessment from a critical institutional perspective and underscore three important realities: 1) for student assessment to enhance student, faculty, academic, and institutional performance, it has to be viewed as an institutional process, not just a series of student assessment activities; 2) a great deal of organizational, administrative, and academic activity is or can be invested in initiating, managing, and using student assessment; and 3) a systematic look at those institutional activities can enhance an institution's ability to plan for and use student assessment effectively.

Student Assessment: A Critical Institutional Perspective

The intent of our study and this monograph is to highlight the importance of viewing student assessment from a critical institutional perspective and to underscore three important realities: 1) for student assessment to enhance student, faculty, academic, and institutional performance, it has to be viewed as more than just a series of student assessment activities; 2) a great deal of organizational, administrative, and academic activity is or can be invested in initiating, managing, and using student assessment; and 3) a systematic look at those institutional activities can enhance an institution's ability to use student assessment effectively.

The data reported in this survey provide a national profile of what comprehensive institutions are currently doing to support and promote the use of student assessment. This evidence provides insight into the activities institutions are doing extensively, those which merit greater attention, and those which make a difference in improving institutional performance. We begin with a summary of our research findings and recommendations concerning specific assessment activities conducted within comprehensive institutions. Then we discuss how comprehensive institutions can use the Institutional Support for Student Assessment (ISSA) inventory and the Framework for Institutional Support for Student Assessment (Figure 1 of this monograph) as a guide for examining their student assessment process and functions. We conclude by suggesting that the results of the national survey used in conjunction with institutional self-examination can serve as the basis for redesigning or planning a student assessment process which can enhance an institution's academic performance.

Student Assessment in Comprehensive Institutions: Results and Recommendations from the National Survey

Institutions that have committed resources to assessing the development and performance of their undergraduate students assessment activities should be able to use the student assessment data they collect in organizational decision-making and to document impacts from their assessment activities. Comprehensive institutions that are engaging in undergraduate student assessment, but do not feel that they are profiting from the process as much as they could be, may want to adopt the strategies of institutions that have reported using and being positively impacted by assessment information. Our research has demonstrated that most comprehensive institutions have made only limited use of student assessment data and given little attention to monitoring impacts from assessment. However, they are subject to external demands for assessment and have adopted a wide variety of student assessment approach measures, institution-wide activities supporting student assessment, and assessment management practices and policies. Our research shows that external influences do play some role in encouraging institutions to conduct and use student

assessment, but there is much that institutions themselves can do to initiate, support and benefit from their undergraduate student assessment efforts. Our research identified strategies from the domains of student assessment approach, institution-wide support for student assessment, and assessment management practices and policies that are associated with comprehensive institutions reaping greater institutional uses and impacts from undergraduate student assessment. Greater uses and impacts mean that not only the institution as a whole benefits, but that faculty and students benefit as well. In the following sections, we highlight the student assessment activities that comprehensive institutions are currently engaging in to a great extent, the activities that they may want to augment, and the activities that are critical to enhancing the use of student assessment data in academic decisions leading to positive institutional impacts.

Student Assessment Uses and Impacts

If institutions are benefiting from their student assessment process, they should report that they are using the resulting assessment data in academic decisions and that the use of these data has a positive impact on both internal processes and performance and the institution's relationship with external constituents. In this section, we describe the extent to which comprehensive institutions are using collected student assessment data and the extent to which these data have had an impact on the institution. Suggestions for increasing institutional uses and impacts of student assessment are outlined in the following sections.

Uses of Student Assessment Information. Most comprehensive institutions are not using student assessment data to make decisions concerning academic practices and policies or faculty. Our study did not attempt to discern why institutions are not making more extensive use of these data. Perhaps institutional decision-makers do not have sufficient data to inform decisions concerning institutional policies and practices. This may be particularly so if assessment data collection focuses on student inputs (for example, basic college-readiness skills or academic intentions of entering students) or outputs (for example, graduation or employment rates of exiting students) without attempting to measure changes in student performance or development, or without examining the relationship between student performance or development and facets of their experiences within the institution (for example, course-taking patterns, financial aid, advising policies). Assessment data use may also be limited if institutions have not created a formal mechanism for incorporating this data in decision-making processes. Comprehensive institutions that are collecting student assessment data but are not using these data in institutional decision making should examine why this is the case. For example, is the type of data being collected not useful for informing decisions? Are there concerns about data quality? Is assessment data not easily accessible or not widely distributed to decision makers? Raising questions of this nature will assist institutions in understanding how they may increase the use of assessment information in decision making.

Impacts of Student Assessment Information. Similarly, comprehensive institutions report very minimal impacts from their student assessment data. We found that most institutions are simply not monitoring whether assessment information has had an impact. Of all institutional performance indicators considered in our survey, comprehensive institutions are most likely to attribute favorable evaluations from their regional accreditation agency, changes in the teaching methods used by their faculty, and increased discussions of undergraduate education to student assessment information. Some institutions have documented assessment-related increases in student retention and graduation rates, and student satisfaction. Comprehensive institutions have least often monitored the impact of assessment on student grades or on other dimensions of their relationships with external constituents such as state or private sector funding, student application and acceptance rates, and institutional reputation. Monitoring impacts is important if an institution is to evaluate the effectiveness of its student assessment efforts. As a first step, the institution must select the indicators of institutional and student performance it wants to monitor as well as the evidence it will use to measure these indicators. Which specific aspects of performance will be

monitored, and the type of evidence used, will vary according to the institution's academic mission and its goals for student assessment.

Regardless of the specific uses and impacts an institution may hope to achieve through student assessment, the remainder of this report suggests institutional practices, policies and strategies that may promote institutional uses and impacts of student assessment data.

External Influences

External influences, such as state and accreditation requirements, can be strong motivators for institutions to engage in or increase their student assessment efforts. In addition, a variety of postsecondary organizations and external funding sources offer support for institutions' assessment programs. This section describes the nature of these influences on comprehensive institutions and provides suggestions for deriving the most benefit from these external relationships.

State Influences. Half of the comprehensive institutions that responded to our survey are under the purview of a state mandate for student assessment. Two-thirds of these institutions report that they worked together with state officials to develop the details of the state-level assessment plan. It follows that one-third of institutions were not involved in this development. Where such opportunities exist, institutions should try to participate in such planning at the state level. State-level assessment mandates that are jointly developed by institutional and state officials have a greater potential to be fair, practical, and ultimately beneficial to institutions. Characteristics of state-level initiatives (for example, whether the state assessment initiative is in the form of a policy or statute, or whether the state mandates specific indicators for institutions to report) have little direct influence on institutions' data collection efforts or on the likelihood that they will use and be impacted by assessment information. However, our research shows that the importance institutions accord to meeting state reporting requirements as a purpose for engaging in student assessment is *not* significantly related to how extensively institutions collect assessment data, how much they use that data for decision-making, or how much they achieve positive impacts from using assessment data. Said differently, institutions that conduct student assessment solely to satisfy state requirements are not likely to reap internal benefits from assessment. Comprehensive institutions that must commit resources to student assessment because of state requirements are advised to also use these efforts for internal improvement purposes.

Accreditation Influences. The majority of comprehensive institutions have completed a regional accreditation review requiring undergraduate student assessment. In fact, for most comprehensive institutions, accreditation requirements were either an important reason to initiate student assessment efforts or a stimulus to increase their involvement in assessing students. Some regional accreditation associations have more influence on institutions' student assessment activities than others. For example, comprehensive institutions in the Middle States, Western and New England accrediting regions collect less cognitive assessment data than institutions belonging to other accrediting regions. Institutions in the Southern accrediting region are more likely to use assessment data in faculty decisions and to report positive impacts on student performance stemming from their assessment efforts. To some extent, these differences reflect differences in the approach regional accreditors have taken toward student assessment. Institutions should be cognizant of the influence of their accrediting regions and must, of course, respond to their requirements for assessment. However, comprehensive institutions should also bear in mind that if responding to accreditation requirements is the only major purpose for engaging in student assessment activities, these activities will not be likely to have an impact on how extensively institutions collect assessment data, how much they use that data for decision-making, or how much they achieve positive impacts from using assessment data. Accreditation requirements notwithstanding, comprehensive institutions that want to maximize assessment information uses and impacts are advised to make certain that the improvement of institutional performance (for

example, improving academic programs and student achievement) is an important purpose underlying their assessment efforts.

Other External Influences. In addition to state and regional accreditation requirements, there are other external resources comprehensive institutions should consider when engaging in student assessment activities. Many comprehensive institutions have made use of conferences and publications on student assessment provided by professional associations and regional accreditation associations. Although a variety of external agencies and programs offer grants to improve or support institutions' assessment practices, the majority of comprehensive institutions have not received such grants. Comprehensive institutions interested in augmenting their assessment efforts may want to explore these opportunities for external support.

Institutional Approach to Student Assessment.

Institutional approach to student assessment refers to institutional decisions regarding the collection and analysis of student assessment information. Dimensions along which assessment approaches can be differentiated include: the type and extent of student assessment data collected; the methods used to collect assessment data; and the analyses conducted and reported for collected data. This section summarizes comprehensive institutions' approaches to student assessment and offers recommendations for adopting assessment approaches that will lead to uses and impacts of student assessment information.

Type and Extent. Most comprehensive institutions emphasize the collection of data on certain types of cognitive, affective and behavioral data from their students such as basic college-readiness skills, competencies in the major, general education competencies, academic progress, academic intentions, satisfaction, and their post-enrollment vocational and educational outcomes. These data are most often collected at one point in time during students' enrollment and provide static measures of students' basic abilities, satisfaction and movement through the educational process that may be sufficient to satisfy accountability requirements. However, they provide institutions with less information concerning how their students are learning and changing while in college. Currently comprehensive institutions collect less extensive information on their students' higher-order cognitive competencies, vocational and professional competencies, personal growth and affective development, involvement with the institution, and post-enrollment civic and social roles. Collecting these types of data, particularly at more than one point in time during students' involvement with the institution, would provide comprehensive institutions with more substantive data concerning students' cognitive and affective growth. In addition, our research shows that the more assessment data institutions collect, the more likely they are to use and be positively affected by assessment information. If they are to achieve maximum benefit from assessment efforts, comprehensive institutions should review the type and extent of assessment data being collected and, where needed, broaden and deepen these collection efforts.

Assessment Methods. How is assessment data currently being collected? Our survey results show comprehensive institutions tend to use tests and other written instruments to collect assessment data. These tests and inventories are often developed by institutions themselves, which may enhance their acceptance and use within the institution. Some units or departments make use of less traditional assessment methods such as capstone courses, observations of student performance, portfolios of student work, and surveys or interviews with withdrawing students. Institutions may wish to encourage even greater use of these alternative methods of collecting student assessment data. These alternative methods allow the assessment of higher-order skills such as application of facts, synthesis, and evaluation. They also tend to promote faculty involvement in assessment through participation in designing and administering their methods, and interpreting data collected through them. Further, the more extensive an array of assessment methods used by an institution, particularly the number of student-centered methods such as portfolios and capstone courses, the more likely that collected assessment information will have a

positive impact on the institution. Comprehensive institutions should encourage or support alternative data collection methods within their departments if they want the resulting assessment data to be useful and to have a positive impact.

Assessment Studies. Finally, once an institution has data on how its students are performing, do they make efforts to examine how institutional structures, policies and practices affect this performance? Although student learning and development are affected by students' internal motivation and abilities and by circumstances external to the institution, a variety of institutional factors can also influence how students perform, such as the availability of academic support resources, time spent with faculty outside of the classroom, kinds of teaching methods used, and interventions from advisors or counselors. About two-thirds of comprehensive institutions in our study do conduct such studies. Most often these studies examine the relationship of non-academic policies and practices (e.g., admissions standards, residence arrangement, financial aid and extra-curricular activities) to students' academic performance. Comprehensive institutions are less likely to examine the connection between the teaching/learning environment (for example, exposure to specific teaching methods, interaction with faculty) and student performance. The number of studies conducted by institutions is a strong predictor of using assessment information to make educational decisions and of achieving positive impacts on faculty and students alike. Yet currently, one-third of comprehensive institutions report they do not conduct any such studies. Clearly, these institutions may wish to commit resources to such studies if they want their assessment activities to produce positive results. Those institutions that do already conduct some studies of the influences on student performance are advised to evaluate whether these analyses include aspects of the teaching/learning environment.

Institution-Wide Assessment Support Strategy

Comprehensive institutions have used a variety of organizational and administrative support strategies to support their student assessment efforts such as including student assessment within the academic mission; determining the main purposes for which the institution is engaging in assessment; sponsoring institution-wide activities to promote involvement in and support for assessment; adopting an institutional plan or policy for student assessment; establishing processes and structures for planning and coordinating assessment; and evaluating the assessment process. This section summarizes the institution-wide support strategies adopted by comprehensive institutions and offers recommendations regarding specific aspects of support strategy that enhance the likelihood of achieving institutional benefits from student assessment information.

Mission Emphasis. One way to determine the degree of institutional support for an activity is to examine whether the activity is mentioned in its mission statement. While most comprehensive institutions emphasize excellence in undergraduate education, only half mention intended educational outcomes for students and less than one-quarter include a focus on student assessment. Our research shows that comprehensive institutions that have included an emphasis on undergraduate education and student assessment in their academic mission statement are more likely to use assessment information in educational decisions and to report positive impacts from assessment on their relationships with external constituents. Thus, leadership in these institutions should consider reviewing the content and emphasis of their academic mission and including explicit mention of student assessment if that does not currently exist.

Assessment Purposes. Similarly, support for assessment can be examined by considering an institution's purpose for engaging in student assessment. Comprehensive institutions report that accreditation mandates and improving undergraduate education are both very important purposes for engaging in assessment. Comprehensive institutions should continue to maintain such a balance especially as our research found that the purpose for which assessment is being conducted is linked to assessment information uses and impacts. Comprehensive institutions that report promoting internal improvement is an important purpose underlying their assessment efforts are more likely to

actually use assessment information for institutional decisions and to improve their external relationships. Conversely, engaging in student assessment to meet state and regional accreditation requirements is not a significant predictor of assessment uses and impacts. Therefore, if comprehensive institutions want to benefit from their student assessment activities, they should examine their purposes for engaging in student assessment and be clear that these go beyond merely meeting external demands.

Institution-Wide Activities. Another measure of support for student assessment is the number of institution-wide administrative and governance activities used to promote student assessment. More than half of comprehensive institution respondents report that they offer workshops on student assessment for academic and student affairs administrators and have a faculty governance committee that addresses assessment issues. However, they seldom provide incentives or rewards to administrators or academic units that engage in or use the results of student assessment, and rarely involve trustees or students in assessment committees. Comprehensive institutions should review the nature and number of institution-wide activities used to promote internal involvement in and support for assessment, and where indicated, include additional avenues. Not only will offering such activities demonstrate leadership support for assessment, but our research found that offering a greater number of administrative and governance activities promoting assessment is a positive predictor of the extensiveness of comprehensive institutions' data collection efforts.

Administrator and Faculty Support. Our survey also asked how supportive various internal constituents were of student assessment. While academic affairs and student affairs administrators and chief executive officers are perceived as being very supportive of assessment, trustees, faculty and students are viewed as being comparatively less supportive. The perceived degree of administrator and faculty support is positively related to the extent of student assessment approaches adopted by comprehensive institutions. It is advisable for comprehensive institutions to periodically measure the degree of internal support for assessment among internal constituent groups as a useful means to gauge the effectiveness of efforts to promote assessment and to encourage more extensive assessment activity.

Institutional Plans and Policies for Assessment. The types of plans and policies institutions develop for assessing students are also indicative of their support for student assessment. Virtually all responding comprehensive institutions have some type of institutional plan or policy for student assessment in place. Most favor a decentralized approach in which academic units or programs are expected to assess students but determine for themselves the specific form assessment activities will take. However, comprehensive institutions with a formal central policy that stipulates certain assessment activities of all its academic programs or units are more likely to report positive internal impacts from assessment. This policy approach may be particularly important in comprehensive institutions because of their dual focus on undergraduate and graduate education, and on teaching and research as faculty role responsibilities. A centralized policy approach may demonstrate that the institution considers student assessment a priority, thus promoting internal participation in assessment efforts and enhancing impacts from assessment. Accordingly, comprehensive institutions should review the nature of their institutional plan or policy for student assessment and consider adopting a centralized policy if one does not already exist.

Planning and Coordinating Assessment. The majority of comprehensive institutions have some type of institution-wide planning group for student assessment. Usually, these groups are staffed by academic administrators, faculty and institutional researchers. Responsibility for planning and coordinating student assessment is most often positioned within academic affairs, and faculty are typically represented in various aspects of the planning process. These approaches to planning and coordination should encourage the acceptance and use of assessment information within academic planning and teaching/learning decisions. However, comprehensive institutions less often report involving students in assessment planning processes. Conceivably, involving

students in planning assessment activities would increase their understanding of the purposes of assessment and encourage their participation in assessment activities. Comprehensive institutions are encouraged to review and reconsider their internal patterns of structuring and involving various groups in planning and coordinating assessment efforts.

Evaluation of Assessment Process. Whether an institution has evaluated its assessment approach is also an indication of the importance it accords to student assessment as an institutional activity. Half of the comprehensive institutions responding to our survey have not evaluated their assessment approach. All comprehensive institutions should consider evaluating their assessment plans, policies and processes in order to determine whether their efforts are meeting their intended objectives and whether the effort being expended to assess students is benefiting the institution. Further, our research found that comprehensive institutions that do evaluate their assessment process, either formally or informally, are more likely to use assessment information in educational decisions and more likely to achieve faculty impacts from assessment.

Assessment Management Practices

Assessment management practices refer to specific practices intentionally devised by institutions to manage their student assessment efforts. Four specific areas of practice were identified as potential influences on student assessment: academic resource allocation, student information systems, internal access to student information, and distribution of assessment reports and studies. This section summarizes the assessment management practices used by comprehensive institutions and provides suggestions regarding practices that maximize institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information.

Academic Budget. Comprehensive institutions rarely allocate resources to academic units based on indicators of their student assessment activities or results. If this practice was augmented, institutional leaders could demonstrate that they consider student assessment to be a high priority. In addition, our research found that comprehensive institutions that do allocate academic resources based on assessment activity or results are more likely to report that their student assessment process produces information that is used in decision making and has a positive impact on indicators of student performance. Thus resource allocation practices offer a powerful way for comprehensive institutions to promote assessment uses and impacts.

Computer Support. Less than half of comprehensive institutions report that they have a student information system that can track students from application through graduation. Even fewer have a system that includes student performance indicators or that is integrated with other institutional databases. Along with improving the management of student assessment data, creating relational databases in which student assessment information can be linked to other institutional data would facilitate conducting analyses of the relationship between students' performance and their experiences within the institution. Comprehensive institutions should examine the capabilities of their information system for student assessment.

Access to Assessment Information. Most comprehensive institutions do provide a variety of internal constituents with access to assessment information on individual students, a practice that encourages the use of assessment data. Providing such access makes it easier for internal personnel to intervene with or give feedback to students regarding their performance. We found that providing internal access to assessment information on individual students is a positive predictor of using assessment information in decisions concerning academic programs and support services.

Assessment Report Distribution. Distributing reports that summarize assessment information and studies is also an important assessment management practice. Comprehensive institutions that distribute assessment reports to a wide array of internal and external constituents make greater use of assessment information in educational decisions and report more positive

faculty and external impacts from student assessment. Report distribution helps to ensure that internal and external personnel are kept well informed of the institution's assessment efforts, student performance and institutional improvement strategies. While most comprehensive institutions regularly distribute assessment reports to traditional internal constituents such as academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals, very few provide these reports to students, the general public or employers. Comprehensive institutions are advised to examine their patterns of assessment report distribution.

Assessment Management Policies

Assessment management policies refer to institutional policies devised to both support student assessment and to direct the use of student assessment information. Five content dimensions of assessment management policies were examined: student involvement in assessment; professional development on assessment for faculty and academic administrators; training in assessment for student affairs personnel; faculty evaluation and rewards; and academic planning and review processes. This section summarizes the assessment management policies used by comprehensive institutions and provides suggestions regarding policies that maximize institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information.

Student Involvement. While comprehensive institutions report that many of their departments require students to participate in assessment activities and provide students with information regarding the purposes of these activities, few provide students with feedback on their assessment results or incentives for participation. Policies encouraging student involvement in assessment activities are important. Obviously, collecting useful student assessment information depends in large part upon the willingness of students to be involved in assessment activities. Providing explanations of the purpose of assessment activities and individual feedback to students regarding student performance should enhance students' motivation to participate. Further, our research shows that comprehensive institutions that have developed more extensive policies on student involvement report making greater use of assessment information in educational decisions. If student involvement policies do not exist or do so only within a few departments, comprehensive institutions should consider extending the breadth of these policies.

Professional Development. Comprehensive institutions do offer professional development on student assessment to their faculty and academic administrators. However, they offer less extensive policies of this nature than do other types of institutions. These policies are more likely to involve activities that do not significantly affect time in the classroom (for example, funds to attend assessment conferences or workshops on assessment) than those that involve greater expenditure of administrative and faculty time (for example, paid leaves or course reduction to develop or improve assessment practices). While understandable from a fiscal perspective, this emphasis on providing professional development support of shorter duration may not provide faculty with adequate time to learn about or develop new assessment techniques. Offering a variety of professional development opportunities should increase the level of faculty and administrative involvement in and support for student assessment. Our research found that those comprehensive institutions that offer more extensive professional development on assessment to their faculty and academic administrators are more likely to use assessment information in educational and faculty-related decisions, and to report that assessment information has had a positive impact on faculty. Comprehensive institutions should review and consider increasing the array of professional development opportunities on student assessment which are offered to their academic personnel.

Student Affairs Training. When planning professional development opportunities for student assessment, comprehensive institutions should not neglect their student affairs staff and administrators. On the whole, comprehensive institutions provide only limited training on assessment to their student affairs personnel, doing so in only a few departments. Yet, offering

assessment-related training to student affairs personnel is a positive predictor of using assessment information in educational decisions. This policy area deserves examination.

Faculty Evaluation and Rewards. Comprehensive institutions rarely have policies that include assessment-related criteria in faculty evaluation and rewards. Although the wisdom of this linkage has been debated in the assessment literature, comprehensive institutions that do include assessment-related criteria in their faculty evaluation and reward processes are also more likely to use assessment information in making educational decisions. Institutions may understandably be reluctant to tie faculty evaluation and rewards to assessment results or indicators of student performance, but there are many other options to consider. For example, institutions can include criteria concerning faculty scholarship in assessment, evidence of using assessment to improve teaching and learning, or participating in student assessment groups or committees.

Academic Planning and Review. Comprehensive institutions make fairly extensive use of student assessment information in their academic planning and review processes, particularly those processes involving the review of academic departments, programs, or curriculum. Our research found that comprehensive institutions that incorporate assessment data in academic planning and review processes are more likely to use and be positively impacted by their assessment information. Such policies do not leave the use of assessment information to chance. Thus, comprehensive institutions are encouraged to build in formal linkages between the collection and analysis of student assessment data with specific academic planning, review and decision making processes.

Inventorying the Institutional Student Assessment Process

Regardless of an institution's history of and support for student assessment, it is important for an institution to take stock of what it is currently doing. The Institutional Framework presented in section two (Figure 1 of this monograph) provides an institutional perspective for such an examination. The ISSA inventory in Appendix A provides a useful quasi-objective instrument for identifying the specific dimensions and activities associated with the student assessment process.

Institutions are encouraged to identify a team of faculty and administrators most knowledgeable about and involved with student assessment to examine their institution's activities on all the dimensions in the ISSA inventory. While most items are objective (e.g., which types of measures are being used and how extensively), the actual pattern on campus may not be widely known. Other items are more subjective (e.g., the institution's purpose for engaging in student assessment) and can provide the basis for good discussion.

This inventory of the institutional student assessment process then can be compared with national data for comprehensive institutions which were presented in Appendix A and summarized in the previous sections of this monograph. This inventorying and comparison process may highlight activities, practices, and policies not currently used; identify areas needing greater attention; or focus on inconsistencies in patterns of activity (e.g., inconsistencies between stated purposes for student assessment and actual uses of student assessment data in academic decisions).

For institutions with an extensive history of involvement with student assessment, such an inventory may serve as a useful basis for identifying new activities to be undertaken, for improving the existing activities and processes, for identifying issues or controversies that need to be addressed, or for redesigning processes that may not be worth the current expenditure of effort and resources. For institutions with less experience with student assessment, the inventory may identify existing activities on which to build or help focus attention in the institution on the importance of student assessment in improving institutional performance. In either case, the inventory and self-evaluation process should help both to focus faculty and administrative attention

on the importance of viewing student assessment as an institutional process and to deal with it more systematically — linking the various domains of assessment activity with institutional improvement.

Planning for Student Assessment

Student assessment in most higher education institutions has emerged, often sporadically, over the past decade due to the need to respond to an accreditation self study, a new state mandate, an academic administrator who promoted it, a faculty group who embraced it for their unit, or an institutional researcher or program review officer who was engaged in studies of student performance. While according to the data in this report, some institutions are beginning to develop a plan or policy for student assessment or have created a group for this purpose, there is little evidence of systematic planning that links student assessment to the external context and to internal institutional governance and management patterns; that develops organizational and administrative activities, practices, and policies to support it; and then uses collected assessment data for academic decisions and monitors their impact. Clearly there are significant institutional differences and complex issues to be addressed if student assessment is to have positive effects. These deserve some systematic, planned attention. The results of an institutional inventory can provide the basis for such an effort.

While we do not advocate a cookbook or standardized approach to planning for student assessment (each institution needs to design its own planning approach to reflect its own governance and leadership styles and traditions), the Institutional Framework (Figure 1 in section two) and the institutional inventory provide a useful basis for redesigning or planning a student assessment process. Using that self-assessment, the following are planning issues that need to be addressed:

External Influences

1. What is the nature of our state assessment process? How is it formulated and what are its requirements/implications for us?

2. What are the accreditation requirements for our institutional and key professional accreditation bodies?

3. What do some of our primary external constituents expect of our graduates?

4. What are external sources of support (educational, financial, technical) for our student assessment efforts?

Institution-Wide Support Patterns

1. What emphasis is placed on student assessment in our mission statement? What are the intended purposes of our institution's assessment efforts?

2. What institution-wide administrative, governance, and academic activities support student assessment? Who are key leadership support groups and how are they involved?

3. What is the nature of our institution-wide plan or policy for student assessment? The role and membership of a coordinating or planning body? And the pattern of authority and responsibility for administering the process?

4. Is the student assessment process to be evaluated? By whom? Using what criteria?

Approaches to Student Assessment

1. Should we have an institution-wide or decentralized (by academic unit) approach to student assessment?

2. What types of measures are to be used? How widely? At what points in time?

3. What types of instruments and methods are appropriate? What technical or professional support does that require?

4. What studies of the influence of students' educationally-related experiences on their performance are to be conducted? What reports of student performance are to be prepared and distributed?

Assessment Management Practices and Policies

1. What assessment management practices exist to guide student assessment? (e.g., resource allocation practices, information systems, data access practices, and report distribution practices)

2. What institutional policies promote the use of student assessment? (e.g., policies on student involvement, professional development, student affairs training, faculty evaluation, and academic planning)

Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment

1. How will we assure the use of student assessment information in educationally- and faculty-related academic decisions?

2. How will we monitor the impact of student assessment on our students, faculty, academic and instructional patterns, and on our external relationships?

While planning for student assessment may not resolve all of these questions, they should be addressed as should issues of the balance between the effort and resources required to maintain the institution's student assessment process and the educational and institutional benefits derived from assessment. When planning is combined with inventorying, these two processes can become a powerful mechanism for understanding and improving institutional student assessment endeavors. Inventorying existing student assessment processes is a first step toward understanding the nature and extent of an institution's student assessment activities. This can be followed by a planning process that considers the recommendations for comprehensive institutions that were presented in this section. Using a systematic planning approach should increase the likelihood that student assessment will contribute to improved institutional performance.

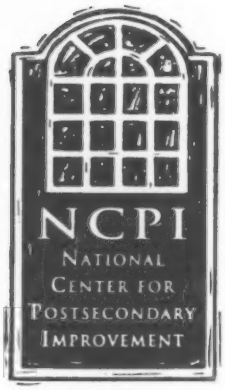
APPENDICES

Appendix A

Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment for Comprehensive Institutions

Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment for Comprehensive Institutions

For The Research Program on
Institutional Support for Student Assessment



NCPI - Project 5.2
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259

An Introduction to the ISSA

The *Institutional Support for Student Assessment Inventory* (ISSA) was developed as part of a national research program examining the *Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment* for the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI). The ISSA is designed as an institutional inventory of the organizational and administrative practices that have been designed and implemented to support the use of *student assessment* on your campus.

Institutional Support Practices are those organized activities, policies, and procedures that your institution has intentionally designed to enhance the practice of student assessment. *Student Assessment refers to those activities focused on measuring dimensions of student performance other than traditional end of course grading.*

This national survey is designed to identify institutional support practices for undergraduate student assessment. The project also examines the factors influencing the adoption of various support practices and how those practices enhance the impact of student assessment for institutional improvement.

We understand that being selected for this survey will require a commitment of time to complete and we appreciate your involvement. This instrument is also intended as an institutional self-assessment inventory to facilitate examination of your institution's own organizational and administrative practices which support student assessment. We encourage each institution to use the survey in this manner. You will receive a summary report of survey responses to all compare with your own institutional profile.

Completing the ISSA

The main purpose is to obtain a profile of your institution's current approach to undergraduate student assessment and its support practices. The inventory may be completed by one individual or group of individuals who are most familiar with the patterns of undergraduate student assessment on your campus. It should take less than one hour to complete.

- Please keep in mind that the questions refer to *undergraduate education* at your institution.
- Respond to each item in the questionnaire to the best of your knowledge.

The questionnaire is coded to allow follow up only. Individual institutions will not be identified in any analyses or reports.

Return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed return envelope. Any questions concerning the survey can be addressed to the following:

National Center for Postsecondary Improvement Project 5.2
School of Education
University of Michigan
610 E. University, Room 2339
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259
Phone: 734-647-2464
Fax: 734-936-2741
Email: ncpi.proj52@umich.edu

Marvin W. Peterson, Project Director

NCPI is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement under OERI grant number R309A60001

©1997. The Regents of the University of Michigan

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

I. Institutional Approach to Student Assessment

A. Type, Extent and Timing of Student Assessment

We are interested in your institution's routine practices of collecting different types of undergraduate student performance data, the extent to which they are collected, and when they are collected. For each of the following content types of undergraduate student performance data:

1) indicate the extent to which each type is collected
2) for each type of data collected, check whether it is collected at entry, during enrollment, at exit, or a combination of these data collection points.

Type	Extent			Timing		
Currently Enrolled Students	Not Collected	Collected for some students	Collected for many students	Collected for all students	Collected at entry	Collected while enrolled	Collected at exit
	(circle one number for each item)				(check all that apply for each item)		
	1	2	3	4			
		CMP	All				
1. Student academic intentions or expectations		**2.99**	3.25		___	___	___
2. Basic college-readiness skills (reading, writing, mathematics, etc.)		**3.40**	3.44		___	___	___
3. Higher-order skills (critical thinking, problem solving)		**2.25**	2.10		___	___	___
4. General education competencies		**2.61**	2.55		___	___	___
5. Competence in major field of study (discipline- or program-specific knowledge)		**2.86**	2.60		___	___	___
6. Vocational or professional skills		**2.00**	2.11		___	___	___
7. Personal growth and affective development (values, attitudes, social development, etc.)		**2.29**	2.12		___	___	___
8. Student experiences and involvement with institution		**2.68**	2.57		___	___	___
9. Student satisfaction with institution		**2.97**	2.96		___	___	___
10. Student academic progress (retention, graduation rates)		**3.86**	3.76				
Former Students							
11. Vocational or professional outcomes (career goals, job attainment or performance)		**2.75**	2.72				
12. Further education (transfer, degree attainment, graduate study)		**2.71**	2.69				
13. Civic or social roles (political, social or community involvement)		**2.08**	1.80				
14. Satisfaction and experiences with institution after leaving		**2.75**	2.63				

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

B. Student Assessment Instruments

Does your institution employ institutionally or externally developed instruments or tests for the following types of undergraduate student assessment information? (circle all that apply for each item):

Content of Instrument	Source of Instrument: Not used (1)	Institutionally developed (2)	State provided (3)	Commercially available (4)
1. Student plans, goals, or expectations	**CMP: 23%**	**46%**	**3%**	**39%**
	All: 21%	51%	4%	32%
2. Basic college-readiness skills (reading, writing, mathematics, etc.)	**CMP: 5%**	**53%***	**12%**	**59%**
	All: 6%	38%	11%	67%
3. Higher-order skills (critical thinking, problem solving)	**CMP: 34%**	**33%**	**2%**	**42%***
	All: 42%	29%	2%	32%
4. General education competencies	**CMP: 31%**	**42%**	**5%**	**35%**
	All: 32%	40%	5%	33%
5. Competence in major field of study (discipline- or program-specific knowledge)	**CMP: 9%***	**76%***	**16%**	**57%***
	All: 19%	64%	12%	39%
6. Vocational or professional skills (excluding licensure exams)	**CMP: 37%**	**43%**	**19%**	**29%**
	All: 34%	43%	14%	25%
7. Personal growth and affective development (values, attitudes, social development, etc.)	**CMP: 29%**	**46%**	**3%**	**39%**
	All: 38%	39%	2%	30%
8. Student effort, experiences or involvement with institution	**CMP: 13%**	**66%**	**4%**	**31%**
	All: 21%	60%	4%	24%
9. Student satisfaction with institution	**CMP: 3%**	**71%**	**9%**	**44%**
	All: 4%	73%	8%	35%
10. Alumni satisfaction and experiences	**CMP: 4%**	**86%**	**9%**	**18%**
	All: 10%	78%	8%	15%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

C. Other Student Assessment Methods

To what extent does your institution use the following methods to collect undergraduate student assessment information? (circle one number for each item):

Other Student Assessment Methods	Not used 1	Used in some units* 2	Used in most units* 3	Used in all units 4
		CMP	All	
1. Observations of student performance (simulations, demonstrations, lab)		**2.24**	2.26	
2. Student portfolios or comprehensive projects		**2.18**	2.10	
3. Student performance in capstone courses		**2.41**	2.15	
4. Student interviews or focus groups		**1.98**	1.84	
5. Transcript analysis		**2.13**	2.16	
6. External examination of students (licensure exams, external reviewers)		**1.08***	2.02	
7. Special surveys of or interviews with withdrawing students		**2.35**	2.40	
8. Alumni interviews or focus groups		**2.03**	1.90	
9. Employer interviews or focus groups		**1.87**	1.87	

D. Student Sub-Populations

Does your institution use different assessment methods for the following sub-populations of undergraduate students? (check one for each item):

		Different		Same as Other Students
		CMP	All	
1.	Adult students	**16%**	10%	_____
2.	Part-time students	**5%**	5%	_____
3.	Minority students	**3%**	2%	_____
4.	Distance education students	**25%**	22%	_____

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

* "Unit" refers to academic areas such as departments, divisions, schools, or colleges.

E. Student Assessment Studies

Does your institution conduct studies of the *relationship between* the following experiences and students' performance (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
1. Student course-taking patterns	24%	26%
2. Exposure to different instructional or teaching methods	19%	21%
3. Patterns of student-faculty interaction	13%	14%
4. Extra-curricular activities	30%	24%
5. Residence arrangements	32% *	21%
6. Student financial aid and/or concurrent employment	31%	30%
7. Admission standards or policies	52% *	42%
8. Academic advising patterns	29%	26%
9. Classroom, library and/or computing resources	14%	17%
10. Do not study the relationship between the above experiences and student performance	35%	38%

Does your institution provide profiles or reports of appropriate student performance information at the following levels of aggregation (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
1. Institution wide	74%	69%
2. Schools or colleges	54% *	31%
3. Academic programs or departments	76% *	65%
4. Special populations or subgroups/students	51%	46%
5. By course or groups of courses	27%	36%
6. Do not provide any reports	7%	11%

II. Institutional Support for Student Assessment

A. Institutional Emphasis

1. Your institutional mission statement explicitly (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
a. emphasizes excellence in undergraduate education as an institutional priority	89%	82%
b. identifies the educational outcomes intended for your students	53%	52%
c. refers to student assessment as an important institutional activity	22%	19%
d. does not explicitly mention any of the above	7%	11%

2. For how many years has your institution engaged in student assessment? _____

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

B. Purpose of Student Assessment

The following are often intended purposes of an institution's undergraduate student assessment process. Please rate the importance of each for your institution. (circle one number for each item)

Purpose	No Importance 1	Minor Importance 2	Moderate Importance 3	Very Important 4
		CMP	All	
1. Preparing institutional self-study for accreditation		3.67	3.86	
2. Meeting state reporting requirements		2.76	2.89	
3. Guiding internal resource allocation decisions		2.62	2.71	
4. Guiding undergraduate academic program improvement		3.46	3.43	
5. Improving the achievement of undergraduate students		3.50	3.48	
6. Improving faculty instructional performance		2.95	3.02	
7. Other (briefly describe): _____				

C. Administrative and Governance Activities

Institutions have introduced a variety of administrative or governance activities that address or promote student assessment. Does your institution engage in any of the following activities? (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
1. Annual presidential or other institution-wide initiatives, forums or seminars on assessment	41%	41%
2. Rewards or incentives for academic and student affairs administrators who promote use of student assessment in their unit	7%	6%
3. Incentives for academic units to use student assessment information in their evaluation and improvement efforts	31%	27%
4. Student assessment workshops for academic and student affairs administrators	61%	56%
5. Board of trustees committee that addresses student assessment	17%	13%
6. Faculty governance committee that addresses student assessment issues	64%	58%
7. Student representation on student assessment committees	41%	33%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

D. Support for Student Assessment

Use the scale below to rate the degree to which various groups within your institution support undergraduate student assessment activities (circle one number for each item):

	Very Unsupportive 1	Somewhat Unsupportive 2	Neutral Unknown 3	Supportive 4	Very Supportive 5
		CMP	ALL		
1. Board of trustees		**3.90**	3.84		
2. Chief executive officer		**4.42**	4.41		
3. Academic affairs administrators		**4.68**	4.64		
4. Student affairs administrators		**4.27**	4.33		
5. Faculty governance		**3.77**	3.80		
6. Students		**3.24**	3.33		

E. Planning and Coordinating Student Assessment

1. Which of the following best describes your institution's *plan or policy* for undergraduate student assessment? Your institution (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
a. has a formally adopted institutional plan or policy requiring specified undergraduate student assessment activities of all academic units or programs	**47%**	50%
b. has a formally adopted plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment in some academic units or program areas (e.g. general education or academic majors)	**21%**	19%
c. has a formally adopted institutional plan or policy requiring all academic units or programs to develop their own undergraduate student assessment plan	**59%** *	39%
d. has a formally adopted institutional plan or policy stipulating institution-wide activities to be conducted by a central committee, office, or officer	**40%**	38%
e. has no formal plan or policy but academic units or programs are encouraged to conduct their own undergraduate student assessment activities	**15%**	13%
f. is currently developing a plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment	**21%**	17%
g. does not have an undergraduate student assessment plan or policy (SKIP TO E-6)	**2%**	4%

2. Is there an *institution-wide group* (committee, task force, etc.) that is primarily responsible for *ongoing planning and policy setting* for undergraduate student assessment? (check one):

		CMP	All
a.	yes	**73%**	70%
b.	no (SKIP TO QUESTION E-5)		

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

3. If yes, who serves on this group? (check all that apply):

		CMP	All
a.	Chief executive officer	7%	13%
b.	Academic affairs administrator(s)/staff	87%	86%
c.	Student affairs administrator(s)/staff	47%	54%
d.	Institutional research administrator(s)/staff	59%	61%
e.	Academic review and evaluation administrator(s)/staff	22%	24%
f.	Student assessment administrator(s)/staff	32%	32%
g.	Faculty	93%	91%
h.	Students	38%	33%
i.	Other _____	8%	12%

4. Who has *executive responsibility* for or who *chairs* the institution-wide group responsible for the ongoing planning or policy-setting process for undergraduate student assessment? (check all that apply):

		CMP	All
a.	Academic affairs administrator	54%	55%
b.	Student affairs administrator	3%	7%
c.	Institutional research officer	17%	18%
d.	Academic review and evaluation officer	6%	5%
e.	Student assessment officer (if separate)	8%	8%
f.	Faculty member	38%	31%
g.	Other _____	11%	11%

5. Who *approves* any changes in your institution's plan or policies for undergraduate student assessment? (check all that apply):

		CMP	All
a.	Board of trustees	12%	17%
b.	Chief executive officer	37%	45%
c.	Chief academic affairs officer	80%	75%
d.	Chief student affairs officer	13%	20%
e.	Institutional research officer	15%	18%
f.	Academic review and evaluation officer	8%	8%
g.	Student assessment officer	9%	10%
j.	Student government	4%	1%
h.	Academic senate or other faculty committee(s)	48%	39%
i.	Faculty union	5%	4%
k.	Other _____	11%	14%

6. Who has *operational* responsibility for your institution's day-to-day undergraduate student assessment activities (e.g., instrument development, data collection, analysis, and reporting)? (check all that apply):

		CMP	All
a.	Academic affairs administrator	44%	45%
b.	Student affairs administrator	16%	20%
c.	Institutional research officer	47%	45%
d.	Academic review and evaluation officer	11%	9%
e.	Student assessment officer	15%	15%
f.	Faculty member(s)	39%	33%
g.	Other _____	16%	13%
h.	No one (SKIP TO QUESTION E8)	3%	3%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

7. To whom does the individual with operational responsibility for day-to-day student assessment activities directly report? (check one):

		CMP	All
a.	Chief executive officer	19% *	29%
b.	Chief academic officer	71% *	56%
c.	Chief student affairs officer	3%	7%
d.	Institutional research officer	4%	3%
e.	Academic review and evaluation officer	1%	2%
f.	Other _____	11%	10%

8. Is there an office which provides faculty consultation in using student assessment for instructional improvement or curriculum development? (check one):

		CMP	All
a.	yes	53%	47%
b.	no	47%	53%

9. If yes, what is the name of the office?_____

F. Evaluating Your Institution's Student Assessment Plan or Process

1. Has your institution evaluated its undergraduate student assessment process? (check one):

		CMP	All
a.	yes, with a formal evaluation	19%	22%
b.	yes, with an informal evaluation	30%	27%
c.	currently developing evaluation plans (SKIP TO SECTION III)	31%	29%
d.	not currently evaluating or planning to evaluate assessment process (SKIP TO SECTION)	19%	21%

2. In evaluating your institution's student assessment process, which of the following elements of that process were reviewed? (check all that apply):

		CMP	All
a.	your student assessment plan and policies	79%	81%
b.	the structure and responsibility for student assessment	68%	64%
c.	achievement of your institution's intended objectives for student assessment	74%	70%
d.	reliability and validity of student assessment instruments and methods	52%	54%
e.	quality of data analysis	54%	51%
f.	use of student assessment information in institutional decision-making	60%	66%
g.	the problems encountered while conducting student assessment activities	74%	69%
h.	comparison of the costs and benefits of student assessment	23%	22%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

III. External Influences on Institutional Student Assessment Activities

A. State Role (FOR STATE-FUNDED INSTITUTIONS ONLY; ALL OTHERS SKIP TO QUESTION III. B-1)

1. Was your state's plan/requirement for student assessment primarily developed (check one):

	CMP	All
a. by state-level officials	16%	16%
b. through joint consultation between state officials and institutional representatives	32%	39%
c. no statewide plan or requirement for student assessment exists (SKIP TO III. B-1)	51%	46%

2. State requirements for student assessment (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
a. were an important reason for your institution to initiate undergraduate student assessment	41%	45%
b. have increased your institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment	56%	62%
c. have not been a factor in your institution's undergraduate student assessment activities	30%	22%
d. have been a negative influence on your institution's undergraduate student assessment activities	6%	4%

3. Your state's reporting requirements include (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
a. evidence that a student assessment plan is in place	63%	68%
b. measurement of state-mandated student performance indicators	66%	64%
c. institutionally-devised student performance indicators	50%	49%
d. evidence of institutional use of student assessment information	48%	52%

4. How has your state higher education agency reviewed or evaluated your institution's undergraduate student assessment plan or process after it was implemented? (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
a. reviewed by state officials	36%	42%
b. reviewed using external reviewers	12%	16%
c. required an institutional self-review	17%	24%
d. no post hoc review has occurred (SKIP TO QUESTION B-1)	54% *	44%

5. The state review of your institution's undergraduate student assessment plan or process included (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
a. review of your institution's student assessment process itself	70%	67%
b. comparison of your institution's student performance record with your past performance	52%	44%
c. comparison of your institution's student performance record with peer institutions	35%	36%
d. comparison of your institution's student performance record with institutions in your state	38%	38%
e. other (briefly describe) _____	7%	10%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

B. Regional Accrediting Role in Student Assessment

1. Has your institution gone through a regional self study accreditation review which required undergraduate student assessment? (check one):

		CMP	All
a.	yes	82%	80%
b.	no	18% *	29%

2. Regional accreditation agency requirements for undergraduate student assessment (check all that apply):

		CMP	All
a.	were an important reason for your institution to initiate undergraduate student assessment	72%	64%
b.	have increased your institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment	85%	79%
c.	have not been a factor in your institution's undergraduate student assessment activities	8%	12%
d.	have had a negative influence on your institution's undergraduate std. assessment activities	2%	0.9%

3. Your institution's regional accreditation agency requires (check all that apply):

		CMP	All
a.	evidence that a student assessment plan or process is in place	94%	90%
b.	intended institutional uses of student assessment information	76%	73%
c.	results of student assessment	69%	66%
d.	evidence of actual institutional use of student assessment information	80%	77%
e.	unfamiliar with regional accreditation requirements for student assessment	4%	5%

C. External Sources of Support for Assessment

1. Has your institution received external grants to improve undergraduate student assessment practices from any of the following? (check all that apply):

		CMP	All
a.	FIPSE	9%	6%
b.	other federal agencies (please identify): _____	3%	7%
c.	a state incentive program	10%	7%
d.	private foundations or corporate sources (please identify): _____	6%	6%
e.	no known external grants received	77%	79%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2. Has your institution used any of the following student assessment services offered by the following postsecondary organizations? (check all services that apply for each type of organization):

Type of Postsecondary Organization	Student Assessment Service Used				
	Not used or not available	Consultation services	Assessment conferences	Training workshops	Publications or research reports
a. Professional associations (Institutional, disciplinary, or administrative)	**CMP: 20%**	**20%**	**60%**	**36%**	**61%***
	All: 29%	13%	51%	32%	51%
b. Regional accrediting association	**CMP:19%***	**20%**	**47%**	**39%**	**56%***
	All: 30%	19%	41%	32%	45%
c. State-level agency	**CMP: 57%**	**8%**	**27%**	**16%**	**23%**
	All: 54%	14%	26%	22%	22%
d. Consortium of institutions	**CMP: 51%**	**10%**	**35%**	**16%**	**21%**
	All: 53%	13%	30%	18%	20%

IV. Academic Management Policies and Practices for Student Assessment

Institutions have a wide array of formally organized policies, activities, and procedures intended to enhance or support the collection and use of undergraduate student assessment information. The following policies and practices have been identified in many institutions.

FOR QUESTIONS A THROUGH D, INDICATE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING POLICIES OR PRACTICES EXIST AT YOUR INSTITUTION.

A. Resource Allocation for Student Assessment (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
1. An explicit operating budget allocation is made to support student assessment.	53%	49%
2. An academic budget process that considers student performance indicators in resource allocation to academic units.	25%	23%
3. An academic budget process that compares academic units on student performance indicators and allocates resources competitively.	2%	2%
4. An academic budget process that rewards academic units for improvement based on their own past student performance indicators.	5%	3%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

B. Student Assessment Information System (check all that apply):

	CMP	All
1. Key student assessment activities have been scheduled into the academic calendar.	56%	57%
2. A computerized student information system which includes student performance indicators	24%	28%
3. Student information system tracks individual students from application through graduation.	43%	42%
4. Student assessment database integrated with faculty, curricular, & financial databases.	8%	10%

C. Access to Individual Student Assessment Information (check all that apply):

Student assessment information on individual students is available to:

	CMP	All
1. Institutional research, assessment or evaluation professionals	77%	76%
2. Senior academic administrators	69%	72%
3. Department chairs or academic program administrators	76%	73%
4. Student affairs professionals	49%	58%
5. Faculty advisors	63%	66%

D. Distribution of Student Assessment Reports and Studies (check all that apply):

Student assessment reports and studies or appropriate summaries are regularly distributed to:

	CMP	All
1. Students	17%	19%
2. Faculty	68%	67%
3. Academic administrators	87%	86%
4. Student affairs professionals	52%	58%
5. Employers	4%	5%
6. The general public	7%	8%

FOR QUESTIONS E THROUGH H, USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE TO INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING POLICIES AND PRACTICES EXIST AT YOUR INSTITUTION (Circle one number for each item).

E. Student Policies on Student Assessment	Not done at all 1	Done in a few depts. 2	Done in some depts. 3	Done in many depts. 4	Done in most depts. 5
		CMP		All	
1. Students are required to participate in student assessment activities		3.66		3.77	
2. Incentives are provided to encourage students to participate in student assessment activities		1.91		1.87	
3. Information regarding the purpose and uses of student assessment is provided to students		3.42		3.52	
4. Students are provided with individual feedback regarding their own student performance results		2.97		3.21	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

F. Professional Development

	CMP	All
1. Faculty are required to learn about or receive training on student assessment	2.19	2.47
2. Funds for faculty to attend or present at professional conferences on student assessment are available	2.85	3.08
3. Workshops, seminars, or consultative services for faculty on the use of student assessment in course design or instruction are offered	2.83	2.90
4. Assistance for faculty in the form of paid leaves, stipends, mini grants or course reduction to improve use of student assessment is provided	1.96	2.00
5. Workshops and seminars for department chairs, deans, and other academic administrators to improve use of student assessment in their unit is provided	2.50	2.55
6. Student affairs staff are required to learn about or receive training related to student assessment	2.05	2.22
7. Student assessment workshops for student affairs administrators are provided	2.04	2.22

G. Faculty Evaluation and Rewards

	CMP	All
1. Faculty evaluation for promotion considers evidence of student performance in their classes (not just student teaching evaluation)	1.94	1.84
2. Faculty evaluation for annual salary and merit increases incorporates evidence of student performance	1.60	1.56
3. Faculty scholarship on or innovative uses of student assessment is considered in promotion, tenure, or salary reviews	2.27	2.01
4. Faculty willingness to use or to participate in student assessment activities is considered in faculty promotion, tenure, or salary reviews	2.04	1.99
5. Faculty receive public recognition or awards for innovative or effective use of student assessment	1.58	1.58
6. Faculty hiring process considers experience or skill in student assessment	1.56	1.68
7. Faculty are encouraged to assess student learning in their classes	3.81	3.99

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

H. Academic Planning and Review	Not done at all 1	Done in a few depts 2	Done in some depts 3	Done in many depts 4	Done in most depts 5
Your institution incorporates student performance data into the following processes:		CMP		All	
1. Academic department or undergraduate program planning or review		3.78		3.67	
2. General education or core curriculum review		3.42		3.55	
3. Course-level review and development		3.24		3.36	
4. Review and planning for student academic support services		2.92		3.09	

V. Impacts of Student Assessment

A. Decision Making

To what extent has the use of information available from your undergraduate student assessment process influenced the following actions? (circle one number for each item):

Institutional Actions	No action or influence unknown 1	Action taken, data not influential 2	Action taken, data somewhat influential 3	Action taken, data very influential 4
		CMP	All	
1. Revising your undergraduate academic mission or goals		2.16	2.06	
2. Designing or reorganizing academic programs or majors		2.67	2.54	
3. Designing or reorganizing student affairs units		1.90	1.91	
4. Allocating resources to academic units		1.79	1.81	
5. Modifying student assessment plans, policies, or processes		2.60	2.61	
6. Deciding faculty promotion and tenure		1.45	1.46	
7. Deciding faculty salary increases or rewards (release time, travel funds, etc.)		1.45	1.39	
8. Revising or modifying general education curriculum		2.55	2.47	
9. Creating or modifying student out- of-class learning experiences (e.g. internships, service learning)		2.22	2.14	
10. Creating or modifying distance learning initiatives		1.70	1.72	
11. Modifying instructional or teaching methods		2.51	2.47	
12. Modifying student academic support services (e.g. advising, tutoring)		2.56	2.56	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

B. Institutional Impacts

Have you monitored the following institutional indicators and been able to document the impact of student assessment information on them? (circle one number for each item):

Internal Impacts	Not monitored, do not know 1	Monitored, negative impact 2	Monitored, no known impact 3	Monitored, positive impact 4
		CMP	All	
1. Affected campus discussions of undergraduate education		**2.41**	2.28	
2. Contributed to faculty satisfaction		**1.60**	1.69	
3. Contributed to faculty interest in teaching		**1.89**	1.88	
4. Led to changes in instructional or teaching methods used		**2.46**	2.45	
5. Contributed to student satisfaction		**2.04**	2.03	
6. Affected student retention or graduation rates		**2.15**	2.20	
7. Affected student grade performance		**1.80**	1.95	
8. Affected student achievement on external examinations (e.g. professional licensure, GRE)		**1.94**	1.97	
External Impacts				
		CMP	All	
9. Affected student applications or student acceptance rates		**1.50**	1.48	
10. Affected allocation or share of state funding		**1.43**	1.46	
11. Affected evaluation from regional accreditation agency		**2.66**	2.55	
12. Affected private fund-raising results		**1.44**	1.42	
13. Affected success on grant applications		**1.56**	1.65	
14. Affected communication with external constituents		**1.81**	1.75	
15. Affected institutional reputation or image		**1.99**	1.94	

Note: * denotes difference greater than or equal to .3 or 10% from average of all institutions.

VI. Further Studies - Optional

This page will be removed from the questionnaire before it is processed and completion of it is optional. However, we would like to know more about your institution's experience with student assessment and we would like to be able to respond to you personally with a follow up report.

Within the next year several institutions will be invited to participate in a more intensive study of the impacts of their student assessment practices and policies. Would you be interested in participating in a case study?

__ yes
__ possibly
__ no

If you are interested, we would appreciate any additional information regarding your student assessment practices that you believe would be of interest to other institutions. If you believe your approach to student assessment or its impacts are unusual, please describe it briefly (or enclose a report you think captures your experience).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please provide your name and address if you are interested in receiving a personal summary report of this survey.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Institution: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this instrument.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix B

Construction and Content of Variables

Variable	Definition
Institutional Characteristics	
Enrollment	Single item. Reflects number of students enrolled in institution. Data from 1995 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
Control	Single item. (1 = public; 0 = private). Data from IPEDS.
Institutional type	Four dummy-coded single items. Reflects the institution's Carnegie type. (Associate of Arts, Baccalaureate, Doctoral, and Research. Master's institutions was the omitted category.) Data from IPEDS.
External Influences on Student Assessment	
State initiative	Single item. Reflects whether the state's assessment initiatives were guided by legislative or other means (1 = no state plan; 2 = state policy; 3 = state statute; 4 = combination of policy & statute). Data from SAS.
State approach	Single item. Reflects whether states mandate common indicators and outcomes (1 = no indicators or outcomes; 2 = institutional specific; 3 = common for some; 4 = common for all). Data from SAS.
Accrediting association	Five dummy-coded single items. Reflects the institution's regional accreditation association membership (Middle States; North Central; New England; Southern; Western. Northwest region was the omitted region). Data from IPEDS.
Development of state plan	Single item. (III A 1) Reflects how state plan for student assessment was primarily developed (1 = state; 2 = joint consultation between state and institution; 3 = no state plan or requirement).
State influence	Four single items. (III A 2 a-d) Reflect the influence of state requirements on the institutions assessment activities: a = important reason to initiate student assessment; b = increased institution's involvement in assessment; c = have not been a factor in assessment activities; d = have been negative influence on assessment activities (1 = yes; 0 = no).
State reporting requirements	Four single items. (III A 3 a-d) Reflect the state's reporting requirements: a = evidence that assessment plan is in place; b = measurement of state mandated indicators; c = use of institutionally devised indicators; d = evidence of institutional use of assessment information (1 = yes; 0 = no).
State review methods	Four single items. (III A 4 a-d) Reflect the method used by state to review the institutions assessment activities: a = reviewed by state officials; b = reviewed using external reviewers; c = required institutional self-review; d = no review occurred (1 = yes; 0 = no).
State review criteria	Five single items. (III A 5 a-e) Reflect the processes included in the state review of the institutions assessment activities: a = review of institutions process itself; b = compare student performance record with past record; c = compare student performance record with peer institutions; d = compare student performance record with other in state; e = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Variable	Definition
Accrediting influence	Four single items. (III B 2 a-d) Reflect the influence of regional accreditation agency requirements on the institutions assessment activities: a = important reason to initiate student assessment; b = increased institution's involvement in assessment; c = have not been a factor in assessment activities; d = have been negative influence on assessment activities (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Accrediting reporting requirements	Five single items. (III B 3 a-e) Reflect the regional accreditation agency reporting requirements: a = evidence that assessment plan is in place; b = intended uses of assessment information; c = results of assessment; d = evidence of actual institutional use of assessment information; e = unfamiliar with regional accreditation requirements (1 = yes; 0 = no).
External sources of support	Five single items. (III C 1 a-e) Reflect the sources of support received to improve student assessment practices: a = FIPSE; b = other federal agencies; c = state incentive program; d = private foundation or corporate source; e = no known external grants (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Use of external services	Four single items. (III C 2 a-d) Reflect the use of services offered by each of the following type of postsecondary organization: a = professional associations; b = regional accrediting association; c = state-level agency; d = consortium of institutions. Respondents could choose from the following services offered by each organization: organization not used or not available; consultation services; assessment conferences; training workshops; publications or research reports (1 = used; 0 = not used).
Institutional Approach to Student Assessment	
Academic intentions	Single item. (I A 1) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on current student's academic intentions or expectations (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).
Basic college-readiness skills	Single item. (I A 2) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on current student's college-readiness skills (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).
Cognitive assessment	Four item factorially-derived scale. (I A 3-6) Reflects the extent to which institutions collect data on current students' cognitive performance: competence in major field; general education competencies; higher-order cognitive skills; vocational or professional skills (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students). Cronbach alpha = .71.
Affective assessment	Three item factorially-derived scale. (I A 7-9) Reflects the extent to which institutions collect data on current students' affective development and satisfaction: experiences and involvement with institution; satisfaction with institution; personal growth and affective development (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students). Cronbach alpha = .68.
Academic progress	Single item. (I A 10) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on current student's academic progress (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Variable	Definition
Post-college assessment	Three item factorially-derived scale. (I A 11,12,14) Reflects the extent to which institutions collect data from former students: vocational or professional outcomes; further education; satisfaction and experiences with institution after leaving (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students). Cronbach alpha = .83.
Civic/social roles	Single item. (I A 13) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on former student's civic or social roles in the community (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).
Timing of data collection	Nine item additive index. (I A 1-9) Reflects when institutions collect data (1 = not collected; 2 = collected at one point in time; 3 = collected at entry and while enrolled, or while enrolled and at exit; 4 = collected at entry and at exit; 5 = collected at entry, while enrolled, and at exit).
Number of instruments	Nine item additive index. (I B 1-9) Reflects student assessment instruments (institutionally developed, state provided, and commercially available) used by institution to collect ten types of assessment information: student plans or expectations; basic college-readiness skills; higher-order cognitive skills; general education competencies; competence in major; vocational or professional skills; personal growth and affective development; experiences or involvement with institution; satisfaction with institution (1 = instrument used; 0 = instrument not used).
Student-centered methods	Four item factorially-derived scale. (I C 1-4) Reflects the extent to which institutions use innovative or nontraditional assessment methods: performance in capstone courses; portfolios or comprehensive projects; observations of student performance; individual interviews or focus groups (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units). Cronbach alpha = .61.
External methods	Two item factorially-derived scale. (I C 8-9) Reflects the extent to which institutions use assessment methods that data from external constituencies: employer interviews or focus groups; alumni interviews or focus groups (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units). Cronbach alpha = .63.
Transcript analysis	Single item. (I C 5) Reflects extent to which institutions use transcript analysis to collect student assessment information (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units).
External examination	Single item. (I C 6) Reflects extent to which institutions use external examinations to collect student assessment information (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units).
Interviews of withdrawing students	Single item. (I C 7) Reflects extent to which institutions use interviews with withdrawing students to collect student assessment information (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Variable	Definition
Student sub-populations	Four single items. (I D 1-4) Reflect the use of different assessment methods for the following different student populations: a = adult students; b = part-time students; c = minority students; d = distance education students (1 = different method; 2 = same method).
Number of studies	Nine item additive index. (I E 1-9) Reflects the number of studies institutions conduct on the relationship between aspects of students' institutional experiences and performance: course-taking patterns; exposure to different teaching methods; patterns of student-faculty interaction; extra-curricular activities; residence arrangements; financial aid and/or employment; admission standards or policies; academic advising patterns; classroom, library and/or computing resources (1 = conduct study; 0 = do not conduct study).
Number of reports	Five item additive index. (I F 1-5) Reflects the levels of aggregation at which student assessment data are provided as reports: institution-wide; schools or colleges; academic programs or departments; special populations or subgroups of students; by course or groups of courses (1 = report provided; 0 = report not provided).
Organizational and Administrative Support Patterns	
Mission emphasis	Three item additive index. (II A 1 a-c) Reflects institutions' mission statement emphasis on undergraduate education and its assessment: emphasizes excellence in undergraduate education; identifies educational outcomes intended for students; refers to student assessment as important activity (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Internal purposes	Four item factorially-derived score. (II B 3-6) Reflects the importance of internal institutional purposes for undertaking student assessment: guiding undergraduate academic program improvement; improving achievement of undergraduate students; improving faculty instructional performance; guiding resource allocation decisions (1 = no importance; 2 = minor importance; 3 = moderate importance; 4 = very important). Cronbach alpha = .79.
Accreditation purposes	Single item. (II B 1) Reflects importance of preparing for institutional accreditation self-study as a purpose for undertaking student assessment (1 = no importance; 2 = minor importance; 3 = moderate importance; 4 = very important).
State purposes	Single item. (II B 2) Reflects importance of meeting state reporting requirements as a purpose for undertaking student assessment (1 = no importance; 2 = minor importance; 3 = moderate importance; 4 = very important).
Administrative and governance activities	Seven item additive index. (II C 1-7) Reflects the number of administrative or governance activities used by institutions to promote student assessment: annual institution-wide assessment forums or seminars; rewards or incentives for administrators promoting use of assessment in unit; incentives for academic units to use assessment information; assessment workshops for administrators; board of trustees committee addresses assessment; faculty governance committee addresses assessment; student representation on assessment committees (1 = yes; 0 = no).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Variable	Definition
Administrative and faculty support	Four item additive index. (II D 2-5) Reflects the degree to which chief executive officer, academic and student affairs administrators, and faculty support student assessment (1 = very unsupportive; 2 = somewhat unsupportive; 3 = neutral or unknown; 4 = somewhat supportive; 5 = very supportive).
Type of plan or policy	Seven single items. (II E 1 a-g) Reflects the institutions plan or policy for student assessment: a = formally adopted plan or policy requiring assessment activities for all academic units; b = formally adopted plan or policy requiring assessment activities for some academic units; c = formally adopted plan or policy requiring all academic units to develop their own assessment plan; d = formally adopted plan or policy stipulating institution-wide activities to be conducted by central committee, office, or officer; e = has no formal plan or policy but academic units are encouraged to conduct their own assessment activities; f = is currently developing plan or policy; g = does not have an assessment plan or policy (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Formal centralized policy	Single item. (II E 1 a) Reflects institution has formal institutional plan or policy requiring specified student assessment activities of all academic units or programs (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Institution-wide planning group	Single item. (II E 2) Reflects institution has institution-wide group for student assessment planning and policy setting (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Breadth of assessment planning group	Nine item additive index. (II E 3 a-i) Reflects the number of internal members included in the institution's assessment planning group: chief executive officer; academic affairs administrator(s)/staff; student affairs administrator(s)/staff; institutional research administrator(s)/staff; academic review and evaluation administrator(s) /staff; student assessment administrator(s)/staff; faculty; students; other.
Responsibility for planning group	Seven single items. (II E 4 a-g) Reflect the internal members who have executive responsibility for the institution-wide group responsible for planning or policy-setting for assessment: a = academic affairs administrator; b = student affairs administrator; c = institutional research officer; d = academic review and evaluation officer; e = student assessment officer; f = faculty member; g = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Approval authority	Eleven single items. (II E 5 a-k) Reflect the internal members who approve any changes to institutions assessment plan or policy: a = board of trustees; b = chief executive officer; c = chief academic affairs officer; d = chief student affairs officer; e = institutional research officer; f = academic review and evaluation officer; g = student assessment officer; h = student government; i = academic senate or other faculty committees; j = faculty union; k = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Operating responsibility	Eight single items. (II E 6 a-h) Reflect the internal members who have operational responsibility for the institution's day-to-day assessment activities: a = academic affairs administrator; b = student affairs administrator; c = institutional research officer; d = academic review and evaluation officer; e = student assessment officer; f = faculty member; g = other; h = no one (1 = yes; 0 = no).

Variable	Definition
Reporting relationship	Six single items. (II E 7 a-f) Reflect the individual to whom person with day-to-day responsibility reports: a = chief executive officer; b = chief academic affairs officer; c = chief student affairs officer; d = institutional research officer; e = academic review and evaluation officer; f = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Conducted evaluation	Single item. (II F 1 a-d) Reflects if institution has formally or informally evaluated its student assessment process (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Evaluations elements	Eight single items. (II F 2 a-h) Reflect the elements that were reviewed during the institutions assessment evaluation: a = student assessment plan or policies; b = structure and responsibility for assessment; c = achievement of intended objectives; d = reliability and validity of instruments and methods; e = quality of data analysis; f = use of information in institutional decision-making; g = problems encountered; h = comparison of costs and benefits (1 = yes; 0 = no).
<u>Assessment Management Policies and Practices</u>	
Budget decisions	Two item additive index. (IV A 3-4) Reflects formal use of assessment information in the budget process: to competitively allocate resources among academic units; to reward academic units for improvement (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Computer support	Three item additive index. (IV B 2-4) Reflects institutional capacity to collect and manage student assessment information: computerized student information system includes student performance indicators; student information system tracks individual students; student assessment database integrated with other institutional databases (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Access to information	Five item additive index. (IV C 1-5) Reflects internal accessibility of assessment information on individual students by: institutional research or assessment professionals; senior academic administrators; department chairs or academic program administrators; student affairs professionals; faculty advisors (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Distribution of reports	Six item additive index. (IV D 1-6) Reflects the number of constituent groups to whom student assessment reports are regularly distributed: students; faculty; academic administrators; student affairs professionals; employers; general public (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Student involvement	Three item factorially-derived scale. (IV E 1,3,4) Reflects the extent to which institutions have policies or practices to promote student involvement in assessment activities: inform students about assessment purposes and uses; require students to participate in assessment activities; provide students with individual feedback on assessment results (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .69.

Variable	Definition
Professional development	Four item factorially-derived scale. (IV F 2-5) Reflects existence of professional development policies or practices on student assessment for faculty and academic administrators: provide funds for faculty to attend or present at assessment conferences; offer student assessment workshops or consultation for faculty; provide assistance (e.g., paid leaves, stipends, course reduction) to improve faculty use of student assessment; provide student assessment workshops for academic administrators (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .77.
Student affairs training	Two item factorially-derived scale. (IV F 6-7) Reflects existence of professional development policies or practices on student assessment for student affairs personnel: require assessment training for student affairs staff; provide student assessment workshops for student affairs administrators (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .84.
Faculty evaluation	Five item factorially-derived scale. (IV G 1-5) Reflects existence of faculty evaluation and reward policies and practices related to student assessment: promotion evaluation considers evidence of student performance; salary evaluation considers evidence of student performance; promotion, tenure or salary reviews consider faculty participation in student assessment; promotion, tenure or salary reviews consider scholarship on assessment; public recognition or awards for faculty use of student assessment (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .77.
Academic planning and review	Four item factorially-derived scale. (IV H 1-4) Reflects the incorporation of student assessment data into academic planning and review processes for: academic departments or undergraduate programs; general education or core curriculum; courses; student academic support services (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .84.
Institutional Uses of Student Assessment	
Educational decisions	Ten item factorially-derived scale. (V A 1-5, 8-12) Reflects the influence of student assessment information in educational decisions: revision of undergraduate academic mission or goals; designing or reorganizing academic programs or majors; designing or reorganizing student affairs units; allocating resources to academic units; modifying student assessment plans, policies, or processes; revising or modifying general education curriculum; creating or modifying student out-of-class learning experiences; creating or modifying distance learning initiatives; modifying instructional or teaching methods; modifying student academic support services (1 = no action or influence known; 2 = action taken, data not influential; 3 = action taken, data somewhat influential; 4 = action taken, data very influential). Cronbach alpha = .83.

Variable	Definition
Faculty decisions	Two item factorially-derived scale. (V A 6-7) Reflects the influence of student assessment information in faculty decisions: deciding faculty promotion and tenure; deciding faculty salary increases or rewards (1 = no action or influence known; 2 = action taken, data not influential; 3 = action taken, data somewhat influential; 4 = action taken, data very influential). Cronbach alpha = .79.
Institutional Impacts of Student Assessment	
Faculty impacts	Four item factorially-derived scale. (V B 1-4) Reflects student assessment impacts on faculty: affected campus discussions of undergraduate education; contributed to faculty satisfaction; contributed to faculty interest in teaching; led to changes in teaching methods used (1 = not monitored, do not know; 2 = monitored, negative impact; 3 = monitored, no known impact; 4 = monitored, positive impact). Cronbach alpha = .79.
Student impacts	Four item factorially-derived scale. (V B 5-8) Reflects student assessment impacts on students: contributed to student satisfaction; affected student retention or graduation rates; affected student grade performance; affected student achievement on external examinations (1 = not monitored, do not know; 2 = monitored, negative impact; 3 = monitored, no known impact; 4 = monitored, positive impact). Cronbach alpha = .82.
External impacts	Seven item factorially-derived scale. (V B 9-15) Reflects student assessment impacts on external constituents: affected student applications or acceptance rates; affected allocation or share of state funding; affected evaluation from regional accrediting agency; affected private fund-raising results; affected success on grant applications; affected communications with external constituents; affected institutional reputation or image (1 = not monitored, do not know; 2 = monitored, negative impact; 3 = monitored, no known impact; 4 = monitored, positive impact). Cronbach alpha = .82.

[1] Assessment of Teaching and Learning for Improvement and Public Accountability: State Governing, Coordinating Board and Regional Accreditation Association Policies and Practices (Cole et al., 1997)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFERENCES

American Association for Higher Education. (1992). Principles of good practice for assessing student learning. Washington, DC: Author.

Association of American Colleges. (1985) Integrity in the college curriculum: A report to the academic community. Washington, DC: Author.

Astin, A. W. (1991). Assessment for excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education. New York: American Council on Education/Macmillan.

Banta, T. W. & Associates (Eds.). (1993). Making a difference: Outcomes of a decade of assessment in higher education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Banta, T. W., Lund, J. P., Black, K. E., & Oblander, F. W. (Eds.). (1996). Assessment in practice: Putting principles to work on college campuses. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bennett, W. J. (1984). To reclaim a legacy: A report on the humanities in higher education. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Humanities.

Cole, J. J. K., Nettles, M. T., & Sharp, S. (1997). Assessment of teaching and learning for improvement and accountability: State governing, coordinating board and regional accreditation association policies and practices. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

Cook, C. E. (1989). FIPSE's role in assessment: Past, present, and future. Assessment Update, 1(2), 1-3.

Cowart, S. C. (1990). A survey on using student outcomes measures to assess institutional effectiveness. Iowa City, IA: American College Testing Program.

Education Commission of the States. (1991). Assessing college outcomes: What state leaders need to know. Denver, CO: Author.

El-Khawas, E. (1988). Campus trends 1988. Higher Education Panel Report No. 77. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

El-Khawas, E. (1989). Campus trends 1989. Higher Education Panel Report No. 78. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

El-Khawas, E. (1990). Campus trends 1990. Higher Education Panel Report No. 80. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

El-Khawas, E. (1991). Campus trends 1991. Higher Education Panel Report No. 81. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

El-Khawas, E. (1992). Campus trends 1992. Higher Education Panel Report No. 82. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

El-Khawas, E. (1993). Campus trends 1993. Higher Education Panel Report No. 83. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

El-Khawas, E. (1995). Campus trends 1995. Higher Education Panel Report No. 85. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

El-Khawas, E. (1996). Campus trends 1996. Higher Education Panel Report No. 86. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

El-Khawas, E., & Knopp, L. (1996). Campus trends 1996. Higher Education Panel Report No. 86. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Ewell, P. T. (1984). The self-regarding institution: Information for excellence. Boulder, CO: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Ewell, P. T. (1987c). Establishing a campus-based assessment program. In D. F. Halpern (Ed.), Student outcomes assessment: What institutions stand to gain (New Directions for Higher Education No. 59, pp. 9-24). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ewell, P. T. (1988a). Implementing assessment: Some organizational issues. In T. W. Banta (Ed.), Implementing outcomes assessment: Promise and perils (New Directions for Institutional Research No. 59, pp. 15-28). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ewell, P. T. (1988b). Outcomes, assessment, and academic improvement: In search of usable knowledge. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), Higher education: Handbook of theory and research (Vol. IV, pp. 53-108). New York: Agathon Press.

Gentemann, K. M., & Rogers, B. H. (1987). The evaluation of institutional effectiveness: The responses of colleges and universities to regional accreditation. Paper presented at the meeting of the Southern Association for Institutional Research and the Society for College and University Planning, New Orleans, LA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 290 392)

Gray, P. J., & Banta, T. W. (Eds.). (1997). The campus -level impact of assessment: Progress problems and possibilities. (New Directions for Higher Education No. 100). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hexter, H., & Lippincott, J. K. (1990). Campuses and student assessment. (Research Briefs, Vol. 1, No. 8). Washington, DC: American Council on Education, Division of Policy Analysis and Research.

Hutchings, P., & Marchese, T. (1990). Watching assessment: Questions, stories, prospects. Change, 22(5), 12-38.

Jacobi, M., Astin, A., & Ayala, F. (1987). College student outcomes assessment: A talent development perspective (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 7). Washington, DC: Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Johnson, R., Prus, J., Andersen, C. J., & El-Khawas, E. (1991). Assessing assessment: An in-depth status report on the higher education assessment movement in 1990. Higher Education Panel Report No. 79. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Lenth, C. S. (1993). The context and policy requisites of national postsecondary assessment. Journal of General Education, 42(1), 9-32.

Lenth, C. S. (1996). What political leaders expect from postsecondary assessment. In The national assessment of college student learning: An inventory of state-level assessment activities. A

report of the proceedings of the third study design workshop (pp. 157-164). Boulder, CO: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. (1996). The national assessment of college student learning: An inventory of state-level assessment activities. Boulder, CO: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

National Institute of Education. (1984). Involvement in learning: Realizing the potential of American higher education. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.

Nettles, M. T. (1995). The emerging national policy agenda on higher education assessment: A wake-up call. Review of Higher Education, 18, 293-313.

Peterson, M. W. (1988). The organizational environment for student learning. In J. S. Stark & L. A. Mets (Eds.), Improving teaching and learning through research (New Directions for Institutional Research No. 57, pp. 23-37). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Peterson, M. W., Cameron, K. S., Mets, L. A., Jones, P., & Ettington, D. (1986). The organizational context for teaching and learning: A review of the research literature. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning.

Peterson, M. W., Einarson, M. K., Augustine, C. H., & Vaughan, D. V. (1999). Institutional support for student assessment: Methodology and results of a national survey. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI.

Peterson, M. W., Einarson, M. K., Trice, A. G., & Nichols, A. R. (1997). Improving Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment: A Review of the Research Literature. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI.

Resnick, D. P., & Goulden, M. (1987). Assessment, curriculum, and expansion: A historical perspective. In D. F. Halpern (Ed.), Student outcomes assessment: What institutions stand to gain (New Directions for Higher Education No. 59, pp. 77-88). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rossman, J. E., & El-Khawas, E. (1987). Thinking about assessment: Perspectives for presidents and chief academic officers. Washington, DC: American Council on Education and the American Association for Higher Education.

Scott, M. R. (1991). Administrator and faculty support for assessment at Virginia public colleges and universities. (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University). Dissertation Abstracts International, 52/03, 891.

Sims, S. J. (1992). Student outcomes assessment: A historical review and guide to program development. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.